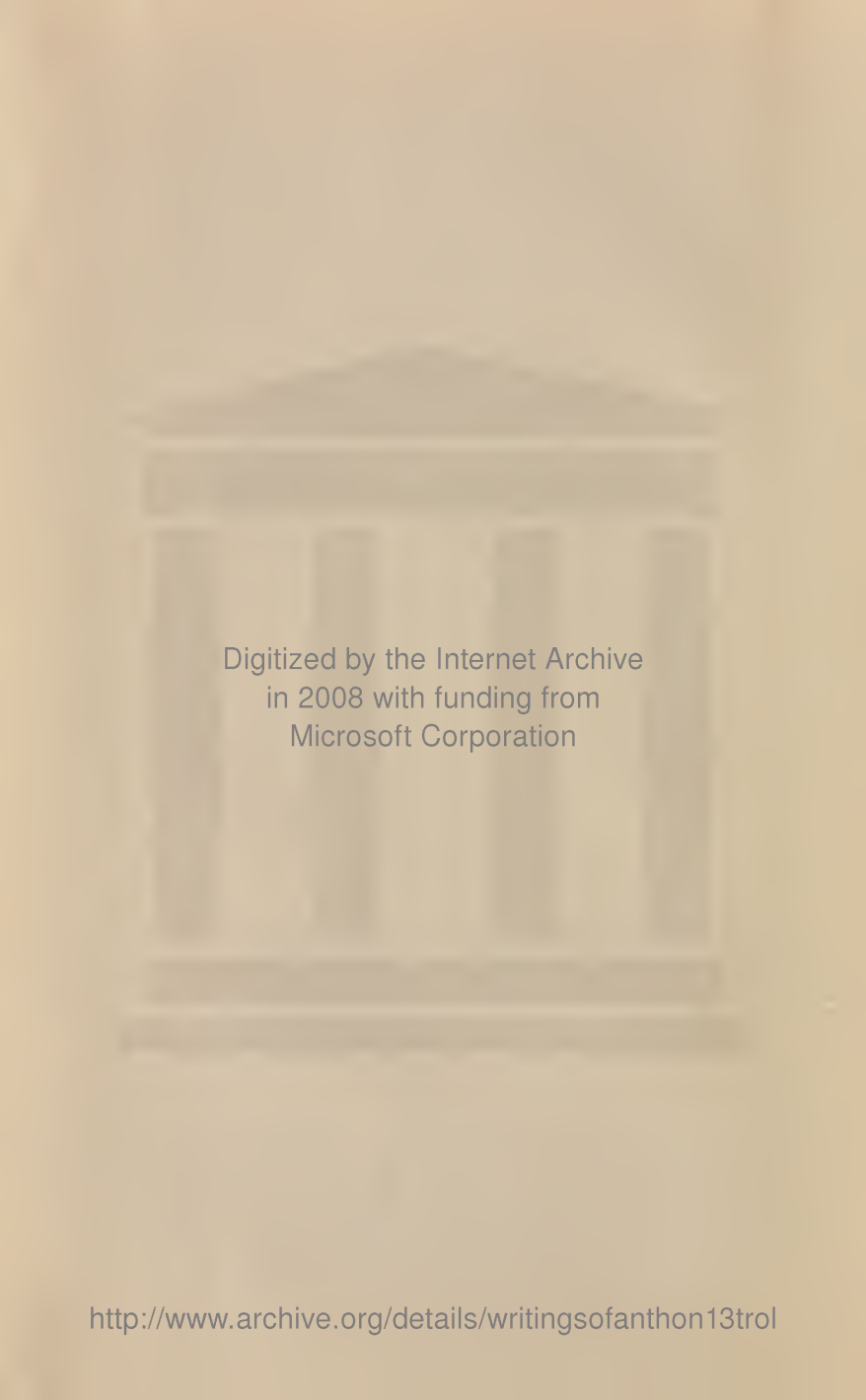
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ASTRAL EDITION

THE WRITINGS

OF

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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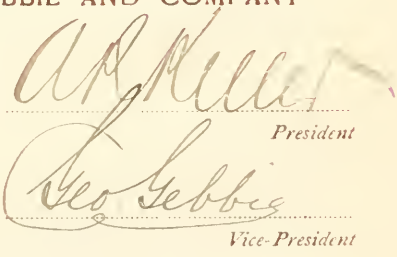

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"*As a clergyman it would be wrong of me.*" — Page 129.

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FRAMLEY PARSONAGE

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME I.

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FRAMLEY PARSONAGE.

CHAPTER I.

"OMNES OMNIA BONA DICERE."

When young Mark Robarts was leaving college, his father might well declare that all men began to say all good things to him, and to extol his fortune in that he had a son blessed with so excellent a disposition. This father was a physician living at Exeter. He was a gentleman possessed of no private means, but enjoying a lucrative practice, which had enabled him to maintain and educate a family with all the advantages which money can give in this country. Mark was his eldest son and second child; and the first page or two of this narrative must be consumed in giving a catalogue of the good things which chance and conduct together had heaped upon this young man's head.

His first step forward in life had arisen from his having been sent, while still a boy, as a private pupil to the house of a clergyman, who was an old and intimate friend of his father's. This clergyman had one other, and only one other, pupil,—the young Lord Lufton; and between the two boys there had sprung

up a close alliance. While they were both so placed Lady Lufton had visited her son, and had then invited young Robarts to pass his next holidays at Framley Court. This visit was made; and it ended in Mark going back to Exeter with a letter full of praise from the widowed peeress. She had been delighted, she said, in having such a companion for her son, and expressed a hope that the boys might remain together during the course of their education. Dr. Robarts was a man who thought much of the breath of peers and peeresses, and was by no means inclined to throw away any advantage which might arise to his child from such a friendship. When, therefore, the young lord was sent to Harrow, Mark Robarts went there also.

That the lord and his friend often quarrelled, and occasionally fought,—the fact even that for one period of three months they never spoke to each other,—by no means interfered with the doctor's hopes. Mark again and again stayed a fortnight at Framley Court, and Lady Lufton always wrote about him in the highest terms. Then the lads went together to Oxford, and here Mark's good fortune followed him, consisting rather in the highly respectable manner in which he lived, than in any wonderful career of collegiate success. His family was proud of him, and the doctor was always ready to talk of him to his patients; not because he was a prizeman, and had gotten medals and scholarships, but on account of the excellence of his general conduct. He lived with the best set,—he incurred no debts,—he was fond of society but able to avoid low society,—liked his glass of wine, but was never known to be drunk; and, above all things, was

one of the most popular men in the university. Then came the question of a profession for this young Hyperion, and on this subject, Dr. Robarts was invited himself to go over to Framley Court to discuss the matter with Lady Lufton. Dr. Robarts returned with a very strong conception that the Church was the profession best suited to his son.

Lady Lufton had not sent for Dr. Robarts all the way from Exeter for nothing. The living of Framley was in the gift of the Lufton family, and the next presentation would be in Lady Lufton's hands if it should fall vacant before the young lord was twenty-five years of age, and in the young lord's hands if it should fall afterwards. Both the mother and the heir consented to give a joint promise to Dr. Robarts. Now, as the present incumbent was over seventy, and as the living was worth 900*l.* a year, there could be no doubt as to the eligibility of the clerical profession. And I must further say, that the dowager and the doctor were justified in their choice by the life and principles of the young man,—as far as any father can be justified in choosing such a profession for his son, and as far as any lay impropriator can be justified in making such a promise. Had Lady Lufton had a second son, that second son would probably have had the living, and no one would have thought it wrong;—certainly not if that second son had been such a one as Mark Robarts.

Lady Lufton herself was a woman who thought much on religious matters, and would by no means have been disposed to place any one in a living merely because such a one had been her son's friend. Her tendencies were high church, and she was enabled to

perceive that those of young Mark Robarts ran in the same direction. She was very desirous that her son should make an associate of his clergyman, and by this step she would insure, at any rate, that object. She was anxious that the parish vicar should be one with whom she could herself fully co-operate, and was perhaps unconsciously wishful that he might in some measure be subject to her influence. Should she appoint an elder man, this might probably not be the case to the same extent; and should her son exercise the patronage without reference to her, it might probably not be the case at all. Therefore it was resolved that the living should be given to young Robarts.

He took his degree,—not with any brilliancy, but quite in the manner that his father desired; he then travelled for eight or ten months with Lord Lufton and a college don, and almost immediately after his return home was ordained.

The living of Framley is in the diocese of Barchester; and, seeing what were Mark's hopes with reference to that diocese, it was by no means difficult to get him a curacy within it. But this curacy he was not allowed long to fill. He had not been in it above a twelvemonth, when poor old Dr. Stopford, the then vicar of Framley, was gathered to his fathers, and the full fruition of his rich hopes fell upon his shoulders.

But even yet more must be told of his good fortune before we can come to the actual incidents of our story. Lady Lufton, who, as I have said, thought much of clerical matters, did not carry her high church principles so far as to advocate celibacy for the clergy. On the contrary, she had an idea that a man could not be a good parish parson without a wife. So, hav-

ing given to her favourite a position in the world, and an income sufficient for a gentleman's wants, she set herself to work to find him a partner in those blessings. And here also, as in other matters, he fell in with the views of his patroness,—not, however, that they were declared to him in that marked manner in which the affair of the living had been broached. Lady Lufton was much too highly gifted with woman's craft for that. She never told the young vicar that Miss Monsell accompanied her ladyship's married daughter to Framley Court expressly that he, Mark, might fall in love with her; but such was in truth the case.

Lady Lufton had but two children. The eldest, a daughter, had been married some four or five years to Sir George Meredith, and this Miss Monsell was a dear friend of hers. And now looms before me the novelist's great difficulty. Miss Monsell,—or, rather, Mrs. Mark Robarts,—must be described. As Miss Monsell, our tale will have to take no prolonged note of her. And yet we will call her Fanny Monsell, when we declare that she was one of the pleasantest companions that could be brought near to a man, as the future partner of his home and owner of his heart. And if high principles without asperity, female gentleness without weakness, a love of laughter without malice, and a true loving heart, can qualify a woman to be a parson's wife, then was Fanny Monsell qualified to fill that station. In person she was somewhat larger than common. Her face would have been beautiful but that her mouth was large. Her hair, which was copious, was of a bright brown; her eyes also were brown, and, being so, were the distinctive

feature of her face, for brown eyes are not common. They were liquid, large, and full either of tenderness or of mirth. Mark Robarts still had his accustomed luck, when such a girl as this was brought to Framley for his wooing. And he did woo her,—and won her. For Mark himself was a handsome fellow. At this time the vicar was about twenty-five years of age, and the future Mrs. Robarts was two or three years younger. Nor did she come quite empty-handed to the vicarage. It cannot be said that Fanny Monsell was an heiress, but she had been left with a provision of some few thousand pounds. This was so settled, that the interest of his wife's money paid the heavy insurance on his life which young Robarts effected, and there was left to him, over and above, sufficient to furnish his parsonage in the very best style of clerical comfort, and to start him on the road of life rejoicing.

So much did Lady Lufton do for her protégé, and it may well be imagined that the Devonshire physician, sitting meditative over his parlour fire, looking back, as men will look back on the upshot of their life, was well contented with that upshot, as regarded his eldest offshoot, the Rev. Mark Robarts, the vicar of Framley.

But little has as yet been said, personally, as to our hero himself, and perhaps it may not be necessary to say much. Let us hope that by degrees he may come forth upon the canvas, showing to the beholder the nature of the man inwardly and outwardly. Here it may suffice to say that he was no born heaven's cherub, neither was he a born fallen devil's spirit. Such as his training made him, such he was. He had large capabilities for good—and aptitudes also for evil, quite enough; quite enough to make it needful that he

should repel temptation as temptation only can be repelled. Much had been done to spoil him, but in the ordinary acceptation of the word he was not spoiled. He had too much tact, too much common sense, to believe himself to be the paragon which his mother thought him. Self-conceit was not, perhaps, his greatest danger. Had he possessed more of it, he might have been a less agreeable man, but his course before him might on that account have been the safer. In person he was manly, tall, and fair-haired, with a square forehead, denoting intelligence rather than thought, with clear white hands, filbert nails, and a power of dressing himself in such a manner that no one should ever observe of him that his clothes were either good or bad, shabby or smart.

Such was Mark Robarts when, at the age of twenty-five, or a little more, he married Fanny Monsell. The marriage was celebrated in his own church, for Miss Monsell had no home of her own, and had been staying for the last three months at Framley Court. She was given away by Sir George Meredith, and Lady Lufton herself saw that the wedding was what it should be, with almost as much care as she had bestowed on that of her own daughter. The deed of marrying, the absolute tying of the knot, was performed by the Very Reverend the Dean of Barchester, an esteemed friend of Lady Lufton's. And Mrs. Arabin, the dean's wife, was of the party, though the distance from Barchester to Framley is long, and the roads deep, and no railway lends its assistance. And Lord Lufton was there of course; and people protested that he would surely fall in love with one of the four beautiful bridesmaids, of whom Blanche Robarts, the vicar's second sister, was

by common acknowledgment by far the most beautiful. And there was there another and a younger sister of Mark's, of whom no prediction was made, seeing that she was then only sixteen, but of whom mention is made here, as it will come to pass that my readers will know her hereafter. Her name was Lucy Robarts. And then the vicar and his wife went off on their wedding tour, the old curate taking care of the Framley souls the while. And in due time they returned; and after a further interval, in due course a child was born to them; and then another; and after that came the period at which we will begin our story. But before doing so, may I not assert that all men were right in saying all manner of good things to the Devonshire physician, and in praising his luck in having such a son?

"You were up at the house to-day, I suppose?" said Mark to his wife, as he sat stretching himself in an easy-chair in the drawing-room, before the fire, previously to his dressing for dinner. It was a November evening, and he had been out all day, and on such occasions the aptitude for delay in dressing is powerful. A strong-minded man goes direct from the hall-door to his chamber without encountering the temptation of the drawing-room fire.

"No; but Lady Lufton was down here."

"Full of arguments in favour of Sarah Thompson?"

"Exactly so, Mark."

"And what did you say about Sarah Thompson?"

"Very little as coming from myself; but I did hint that you thought, or that I thought that you thought, that one of the regular trained schoolmistresses would be better."

"But her ladyship did not agree?"

"Well, I won't exactly say that;—though I think that perhaps she did not."

"I am sure she did not. When she has a point to carry, she is very fond of carrying it."

"But then, Mark, her points are generally so good."

"But, you see, in this affair of the school she is thinking more of her protégée than she does of the children."

"Tell her that, and I am sure she will give way." And then again they were both silent. And the vicar having thoroughly warmed himself as far as this might be done by facing the fire, turned round and began the operation à tergo.

"Come, Mark, it is twenty minutes past six. Will you go and dress?"

"I 'll tell you what, Fanny; she must have her way about Sarah Thompson. You can see her to-morrow and tell her so."

"I am sure, Mark, I would not give way, if I thought it wrong. Nor would she expect it."

"If I persist this time, I shall certainly have to yield the next; and then the next may probably be more important."

"But if it 's wrong, Mark?"

"I did n't say it was wrong. Besides, if it is wrong, wrong in some infinitesimal degree, one must put up with it. Sarah Thompson is very respectable; the only question is whether she can teach."

The young wife, though she did not say so, had some idea that her husband was in error. It is true that one must put up with wrong, with a great deal of wrong. But no one need put up with wrong that he

can remedy. Why should he, the vicar, consent to receive an incompetent teacher for the parish children, when he was able to procure one that was competent? In such a case,—so thought Mrs. Robarts to herself, —she would have fought the matter out with Lady Lufton. On the next morning, however, she did as she was bid, and signified to the dowager that all objection to Sarah Thompson would be withdrawn.

"Ah! I was sure he would agree with me," said her ladyship, "when he learned what sort of person she is. I know I had only to explain;"—and then she plumed her feathers, and was very gracious; for to tell the truth, Lady Lufton did not like to be opposed in things which concerned the parish nearly.

"And, Fanny," said Lady Lufton, in her kindest manner, "you are not going anywhere on Saturday, are you?"

"No, I think not."

"Then you must come to us. Justinia is to be here, you know,"—Lady Meredith was named Justinia,— "and you and Mr. Robarts had better stay with us till Monday. He can have the little book-room all to himself on Sunday. The Merediths go on Monday; and Justinia won't be happy if you are not with her." It would be unjust to say that Lady Lufton had determined not to invite the Robartses if she were not allowed to have her own way about Sarah Thompson. But such would have been the result. As it was, however, she was all kindness; and when Mrs. Robarts made some little excuse, saying that she was afraid she must return home in the evening, because of the children, Lady Lufton declared that there was room enough at Framley Court for baby and nurse, and so

settled the matter in her own way, with a couple of nods and three taps of her umbrella. This was on a Tuesday morning, and on the same evening, before dinner, the vicar again seated himself in the same chair before the drawing-room fire, as soon as he had seen his horse led into the stable.

"Mark," said his wife, "the Merediths are to be at Framley on Saturday and Sunday; and I have promised that we will go up and stay over till Monday."

"You don't mean it! Goodness gracious, how provoking!"

"Why? I thought you would n't mind it. Justinia would think it unkind if I were not there."

"You can go, my dear, and of course will go. But as for me, it is impossible."

"But why, love?"

"Why? Just now, at the schoolhouse, I answered a letter that was brought to me from Chaldicotes. Sowerby insists on my going over there for a week or so; and I have said that I would."

"Go to Chaldicotes for a week, Mark?"

"I believe I have even consented to ten days."

"And be away two Sundays?"

"No, Fanny, only one. Don't be so censorious."

"Don't call me censorious, Mark; you know I am not so. But I am so sorry. It is just what Lady Lufton won't like. Besides, you were away in Scotland two Sundays last month."

"In September, Fanny. And that is being censorious."

"Oh, but, Mark, dear Mark; don't say so. You know I don't mean it. But Lady Lufton does not like those Chaldicotes people. You know Lord Luf-

ton was with you the last time you were there; and how annoyed she was!"

"Lord Lufton won't be with me now, for he is still in Scotland. The reason why I am going is this: Harold Smith and his wife will be there, and I am very anxious to know more of them. I have no doubt that Harold Smith will be in the government some day, and I cannot afford to neglect such a man's acquaintance."

"But, Mark, what do you want of any government?"

"Well, Fanny, of course I am bound to say that I want nothing; neither in one sense do I; but, nevertheless, I shall go and meet the Harold Smiths."

"Could you not be back before Sunday?"

"I have promised to preach at Chaldicotes. Harold Smith is going to lecture at Barchester, about the Australasian archipelago, and I am to preach a charity sermon on the same subject. They want to send out more missionaries."

"A charity sermon at Chaldicotes!"

"And why not? The house will be quite full, you know; and I dare say the Arabins will be there."

"I think not; Mrs. Arabin may get on with Mrs. Harold Smith, though I doubt that; but I 'm sure she 's not fond of Mrs. Smith's brother. I don't think she would stay at Chaldicotes."

"And the bishop will probably be there for a day or two."

"That is much more likely, Mark. If the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Proudie is taking you to Chaldicotes, I have not a word more to say."

"I am not a bit more fond of Mrs. Proudie than you are, Fanny," said the vicar, with something like vexation in the tone of his voice, for he thought that his

wife was hard upon him. "But it is generally thought that a parish clergyman does well to meet his bishop now and then. And as I was invited there, especially to preach while all these people are staying at the place, I could not well refuse." And then he got up, and taking his candlestick, escaped to his dressing-room.

"But what am I to say to Lady Lufton?" his wife said to him, in the course of the evening.

"Just write her a note, and tell her that you find I had promised to preach at Chaldicotes next Sunday. You 'll go of course?"

"Yes; but I know she 'll be annoyed. You were away the last time she had people there."

"It can't be helped. She must put it down against Sarah Thompson. She ought not to expect to win always."

"I should not have minded it if she had lost, as you call it, about Sarah Thompson. That was a case in which you ought to have had your own way."

"And this other is a case in which I shall have it. It 's a pity that there should be such a difference; is n't it?"

Then the wife perceived that, vexed as she was, it would be better that she should say nothing further; and before she went to bed, she wrote the note to Lady Lufton, as her husband recommended.

CHAPTER II.

THE FRAMLEY SET, AND THE CHALDICOTES SET.

It will be necessary that I should say a word or two of some of the people named in the few preceding pages, and also of the localities in which they lived. Of Lady Lufton herself enough, perhaps, has been written to introduce her to my readers. The Framley property belonged to her son; but as Lufton Park,—an ancient ramshackle place in another county,—had heretofore been the family residence of the Lufton family, Framley Court had been apportioned to her for her residence for life. Lord Lufton himself was still unmarried; and as he had no establishment at Lufton Park,—which indeed had not been inhabited since his grandfather died,—he lived with his mother when it suited him to live anywhere in that neighbourhood. The widow would fain have seen more of him than he allowed her to do. He had a shooting lodge in Scotland, and apartments in London, and a string of horses in Leicestershire,—much to the disgust of the county gentry around him, who held that their own hunting was as good as any that England could afford. His lordship, however, paid his subscription to the East Barsetshire pack, and then thought himself at liberty to follow his own pleasure as to his own amusement.

Framley itself was a pleasant country place, having

about it nothing of seignorial dignity or grandeur, but possessing everything necessary for the comfort of country life. The house was a low building of two stories, built at different periods, and devoid of all pretensions to any style of architecture; but the rooms, though not lofty, were warm and comfortable, and the gardens were trim and neat beyond all others in the county. Indeed, it was for its gardens only that Framley Court was celebrated. Village there was none, properly speaking. The high-road went winding about through the Framley paddocks, shrubberies, and wood-skirted home fields, for a mile and a half, not two hundred yards of which ran in a straight line; and there was a cross-road which passed down through the domain, whereby there came to be a locality called Framley Cross. Here stood the "Lufton Arms," and here, at Framley Cross, the hounds occasionally would meet; for the Framley woods were drawn in spite of the young lord's truant disposition; and then, at the Cross also, lived the shoemaker, who kept the post-office.

Framley church was distant from this just a quarter of a mile, and stood immediately opposite to the chief entrance to Framley Court. It was but a mean, ugly building, having been erected about a hundred years since, when all churches then built were made to be mean and ugly; nor was it large enough for the congregation, some of whom were thus driven to the dissenting chapels, the Sions and Ebenezers, which had got themselves established on each side of the parish, in putting down which Lady Lufton thought that her pet parson was hardly as energetic as he might be. It was therefore a matter near to Lady Lufton's heart

to see a new church built, and she was urgent in her eloquence both with her son and with the vicar, to have this good work commenced.

Beyond the church, but close to it, were the boys' school and girls' school, two distinct buildings, which owed their erection to Lady Lufton's energy; then came a neat little grocer's shop, the neat grocer being the clerk and sexton, and the neat grocer's wife, the pew-opener in the church. Podgens was their name, and they were great favourites with her ladyship, both having been servants up at the house. And here the road took a sudden turn to the left, turning, as it were, away from Framley Court; and just beyond the turn was the vicarage, so that there was a little garden path running from the back of the vicarage grounds into the churchyard, cutting the Podgens off into an isolated corner of their own;—from whence, to tell the truth, the vicar would have been glad to banish them and their cabbages, could he have had the power to do so. For has not the small vineyard of Naboth been always an eyesore to neighbouring potentates?

The potentate in this case had as little excuse as Ahab, for nothing in the parsonage way could be more perfect than his parsonage. It had all the details requisite for the house of a moderate gentleman with moderate means, and none of those expensive superfluities which immoderate gentlemen demand, or which themselves demand immoderate means. And then the gardens and paddocks were exactly suited to it; and everything was in good order;—not exactly new, so as to be raw and uncovered, and redolent of workmen; but just at that era of their existence in which newness gives way to comfortable homeliness.

Other village at Framley there was none. At the back of the Court, up one of those cross-roads, there was another small shop or two, and there was a very neat cottage residence, in which lived the widow of a former curate, another protégé of Lady Lufton's; and there was a big, staring, brick house, in which the present curate lived; but this was a full mile distant from the church, and farther from Framley Court, standing on that cross-road which runs from Framley Cross in a direction away from the mansion. This gentleman, the Rev. Evan Jones, might, from his age, have been the vicar's father; but he had been for many years curate of Framley; and though he was personally disliked by Lady Lufton, as being low church in his principles and unsightly in his appearance, nevertheless, she would not urge his removal. He had two or three pupils in that large brick house, and, if turned out from these and from his curacy, might find it difficult to establish himself elsewhere. On this account mercy was extended to the Rev. E. Jones, and, in spite of his red face and awkward big feet, he was invited to dine at Framley Court, with his plain daughter, once in every three months.

Over and above these, there was hardly a house in the parish of Framley outside the bounds of Framley Court, except those of farmers and farm labourers; and yet the parish was of large extent.

Framley is in the eastern division of the county of Barsetshire, which, as all the world knows, is, politically speaking, as true blue a county as any in England. There have been backslidings even here, it is true; but then, in what county have there not been such backslidings? Where, in these pinchbeck days, can we

hope to find the old agricultural virtue in all its purity? But, among those backsliders, I regret to say, that men now reckon Lord Lufton. Not that he is a violent whig, or perhaps that he is a whig at all. But he jeers and sneers at the old county doings; declares, when solicited on the subject, that, as far as he is concerned, Mr. Bright may sit for the county if he pleases; and alleges, that being unfortunately a peer, he has no right even to interest himself in the question. All this is deeply regretted, for, in the old days, there was no portion of the county more decidedly true blue than that Framley district; and, indeed, up to the present day, the dowager is able to give an occasional helping hand.

Chaldicotes is the seat of Nathaniel Sowerby, Esq., who, at the moment supposed to be now present, is one of the members for the Western Division of Barsetshire. But this Western Division can boast none of the fine political attributes which grace its twin brother. It is decidedly whig, and is almost governed in its politics by one or two great whig families. It has been said that Mark Robarts was about to pay a visit to Chaldicotes, and it has been hinted that his wife would have been as well pleased had this not been the case. Such was certainly the fact; for she, dear, prudent, excellent wife as she was, knew that Mr. Sowerby was not the most eligible friend in the world for a young clergyman, and knew, also, that there was but one other house in the whole county the name of which was so distasteful to Lady Lufton. The reasons for this were, I may say, manifold. In the first place, Mr. Sowerby was a whig, and was seated in Parliament mainly by the interest of that great whig autocrat

the Duke of Omnium, whose residence was more dangerous even than that of Mr. Sowerby, and whom Lady Lufton regarded as an impersonation of Lucifer upon earth. Mr. Sowerby, too, was unmarried,—as indeed, also, was Lord Lufton, much to his mother's grief. Mr. Sowerby, it is true, was fifty, whereas the young lord was as yet only twenty-six, but, nevertheless, her ladyship was becoming anxious on the subject. In her mind every man was bound to marry as soon as he could maintain a wife; and she held an idea,—a quite private tenet, of which she was herself but imperfectly conscious,—that men in general were inclined to neglect this duty for their own selfish gratifications; that the wicked ones encouraged the more innocent in this neglect; and that many would not marry at all, were not an unseen coercion exercised against them by the other sex. The Duke of Omnium was the very head of all such sinners, and Lady Lufton greatly feared that her son might be made subject to the baneful Omnium influence by means of Mr. Sowerby and Chaldicotes. And then Mr. Sowerby was known to be a very poor man, with a very large estate. He had wasted, men said, much on electioneering, and more in gambling. A considerable portion of his property had already gone into the hands of the duke, who, as a rule, bought up everything around him that was to be purchased. Indeed, it was said of him by his enemies, that so covetous was he of Barsetshire property, that he would lead a young neighbour on to his ruin, in order that he might get his land. What—oh! what if he should come to be possessed in this way of any of the fair acres of Framley Court? What if he should become possessed of them all? It can hardly be

wondered at that Lady Lufton should not like Chaldicotes.

The Chaldicotes set, as Lady Lufton called them, were in every way opposed to what a set should be according to her ideas. She liked cheerful, quiet, well-to-do people, who loved their church, their country, and their Queen, and who were not too anxious to make a noise in the world. She desired that all the farmers round her should be able to pay their rents without trouble, that all the old women should have warm flannel petticoats, that the working men should be saved from rheumatism by healthy food and dry houses, that they should all be obedient to their pastors and masters,—temporal as well as spiritual. That was her idea of loving her country. She desired also that the copses should be full of pheasants, the stubble-field of partridges, and the gorse coverts of foxes. In that way, also, she loved her country. She had ardently longed, during that Crimean war, that the Russians might be beaten,—but not by the French, to the exclusion of the English, as had seemed to her to be too much the case; and hardly by the English under the dictatorship of Lord Palmerston. Indeed, she had had but little faith in that war after Lord Aberdeen had been expelled. If, indeed, Lord Derby could have come in! But now as to this Chaldicotes set. After all, there was nothing so very dangerous about them; for it was in London, not in the country, that Mr. Sowerby indulged, if he did indulge, his bachelor mal-practices. Speaking of them as a set, the chief offender was Mr. Harold Smith, or perhaps his wife. He also was a member of Parliament, and, as many thought, a rising man. His father had been for many

years a debater in the House, and had held high office. Harold, in early life, had intended himself for the Cabinet; and if working hard at his trade could ensure success, he ought to obtain it sooner or later. He had already filled more than one subordinate station, had been at the Treasury, and for a month or two at the Admiralty, astonishing official mankind by his diligence. Those last-named few months had been under Lord Aberdeen, with whom he had been forced to retire. He was a younger son, and not possessed of any large fortune. Politics, as a profession, was therefore of importance to him. He had in early life married a sister of Mr. Sowerby; and as the lady was some six or seven years older than himself, and had brought with her but a scanty dowry, people thought that in this matter Mr. Harold Smith had not been perspicacious. Mr. Harold Smith was not personally a popular man with any party, though some judged him to be eminently useful. He was laborious, well-informed, and, on the whole, honest; but he was conceited, long-winded, and pompous.

Mrs. Harold Smith was the very opposite of her lord. She was a clever, bright woman, good-looking for her time of life,—and she was now over forty,—with a keen sense of the value of all worldly things, and a keen relish for all the world's pleasures. She was neither laborious, nor well-informed, nor perhaps altogether honest. What woman ever understood the necessity or recognised the advantage of political honesty? But then she was neither dull nor pompous; and if she was conceited, she did not show it. She was a disappointed woman, as regards her husband, seeing that she had married him on the speculation

that he would at once become politically important; and as yet Mr. Smith had not quite fulfilled the prophecies of his early life.

And Lady Lufton, when she spoke of the Chaldicotes set, distinctly included, in her own mind, the bishop of Barchester, and his wife and daughter. Seeing that Bishop Proudie was, of course, a man much addicted to religion and to religious thinking, and that Mr. Sowerby himself had no peculiar religious sentiments whatever, there would not at first sight appear to be ground for much intercourse, and perhaps there was not much of such intercourse; but Mrs. Proudie and Mrs. Harold Smith were firm friends of four or five years' standing,—ever since the Proudies came into the diocese; and therefore the bishop was usually taken to Chaldicotes whenever Mrs. Smith paid her brother a visit. Now Bishop Proudie was by no means a high church dignitary, and Lady Lufton had never forgiven him for coming into that diocese. She had, instinctively, a high respect for the episcopal office; but of Bishop Proudie himself she hardly thought better than she did of Mr. Sowerby, or of that fabricator of evil, the Duke of Omnium. Whenever Mr. Robarts would plead that in going anywhere he would have the benefit of meeting the bishop, Lady Lufton would slightly curl her upper lip. She could not say in words that Bishop Proudie,—bishop as he certainly must be called,—was no better than he ought to be; but by that curl of her lip she did explain to those who knew her that such was the inner feeling of her heart.

And then it was understood,—Mark Robarts, at least, had so heard, and the information soon reached Framley Court,—that Mr. Supplehouse was to make

one of the Chaldicotes party. Now Mr. Supplehouse was a worse companion for a gentlemanlike, young, high church, conservative county parson than even Harold Smith. He also was in Parliament, and had been extolled during the early days of that Russian war by some portion of the metropolitan daily press, as the only man who could save the country. Let him be in the ministry, the Jupiter had said, and there would be some hope of reform, some chance that England's ancient glory would not be allowed in these perilous times to go headlong to oblivion. And upon this the ministry, not anticipating much salvation from Mr. Supplehouse, but willing, as they usually are, to have the Jupiter at their back, did send for that gentleman, and gave him some footing among them. But how can a man born to save a nation, and to lead a people, be content to fill the chair of an under-secretary? Supplehouse was not content, and soon gave it to be understood that his place must be much higher than any yet tendered to him. The seals of high office, or war to the knife, was the alternative which he offered to a much-belaboured Head of Affairs,—nothing doubting that the Head of Affairs would recognise the claimant's value, and would have before his eyes a wholesome fear of the Jupiter. But the Head of Affairs, much belaboured as he was, knew that he might pay too high even for Mr. Supplehouse and the Jupiter; and the saviour of the nation was told that he might swing his tomahawk. Since that time he had been swinging his tomahawk, but not with so much effect as had been anticipated. He also was very intimate with Mr. Sowerby, and was decidedly one of the Chaldicotes set. And there were many others in-

cluded in the stigma whose sins were political or religious rather than moral. But they were gall and wormwood to Lady Lufton, who regarded them as children of the Lost One, and who grieved with a mother's grief when she knew that her son was among them, and felt all a patron's anger when she heard that her clerical protégé was about to seek such society. Mrs. Robarts might well say that Lady Lufton would be annoyed.

"You won't call at the house before you go, will you?" the wife asked on the following morning. He was to start after lunch on that day, driving himself in his own gig, so as to reach Chaldicotes, some twenty-four miles distant, before dinner.

"No, I think not. What good should I do?"

"Well, I can't explain; but I think I should call: partly, perhaps, to show her that, as I had determined to go, I was not afraid of telling her so."

"Afraid! That 's nonsense, Fanny. I 'm not afraid of her. But I don't see why I should bring down upon myself the disagreeable things she will say. Besides, I have not time. I must walk up and see Jones about the duties; and then, what with getting ready, I shall have enough to do to get off in time."

He paid his visit to Mr. Jones, the curate, feeling no qualms of conscience there, as he rather boasted of all the members of Parliament he was going to meet, and of the bishop who would be with them. Mr. Evan Jones was only his curate, and in speaking to him of the matter he could talk as though it were quite the proper thing for a vicar to meet his bishop at the house of a county member. And one would be inclined to say that it was proper;—only why could he not talk of it in the same tone to Lady Lufton? And

then, having kissed his wife and children, he drove off, well pleased with his prospect for the coming ten days, but already anticipating some discomfort on his return.

On the three following days Mrs. Robarts did not meet her ladyship. She did not exactly take any steps to avoid such a meeting, but she did not purposely go up to the big house. She went to her school as usual, and made one or two calls among the farmers' wives, but put no foot within the Framley Court grounds. She was braver than her husband, but even she did not wish to anticipate the evil day. On the Saturday, just before it began to get dusk, when she was thinking of preparing for the fatal plunge, her friend, Lady Meredith, came to her.

"So, Fanny, we shall again be so unfortunate as to miss Mr. Robarts," said her ladyship.

"Yes. Did you ever know anything so unlucky? But he had promised Mr. Sowerby before he heard that you were coming. Pray do not think that he would have gone away had he known it."

"We should have been sorry to keep him from so much more amusing a party."

"Now, Justinia, you are unfair. You intend to imply that he has gone to Chaldicotes because he likes it better than Framley Court; but that is not the case. I hope Lady Lufton does not think that it is."

Lady Meredith laughed as she put her arm round her friend's waist. "Don't lose your eloquence in defending him to me," she said. "You 'll want all that for my mother."

"But is your mother angry?" asked Mrs. Robarts, showing by her countenance how eager she was for true tidings on the subject.

"Well, Fanny, you know her ladyship as well as I do. She thinks so very highly of the vicar of Framley that she does begrudge him to those politicians at Chaldicotes."

"But, Justinia, the bishop is to be there, you know."

"I don't think that that consideration will at all reconcile my mother to the gentleman's absence. He ought to be very proud, I know, to find that he is so much thought of. But come, Fanny, I want you to walk back with me, and you can dress at the house. And now we 'll go and look at the children."

After that, as they walked together to Framley Court, Mrs. Robarts made her friend promise that she would stand by her if any serious attack were made on the absent clergyman.

"Are you going up to your room at once?" said the vicar's wife, as soon as they were inside the porch leading into the hall. Lady Meredith immediately knew what her friend meant, and decided that the evil day should not be postponed. "We had better go in and have it over," she said, "and then we shall be comfortable for the evening." So the drawing-room door was opened, and there was Lady Lufton alone upon the sofa.

"Now, mamma," said the daughter, "you must n't scold Fanny much about Mr. Robarts. He has gone to preach a charity sermon before the bishop, and, under those circumstances, perhaps, he could not refuse." This was a stretch on the part of Lady Meredith,—put in with much good-nature, no doubt; but still a stretch; for no one had supposed that the bishop would remain at Chaldicotes for the Sunday.

"How do you do, Fanny?" said Lady Lufton, getting up. "I am not going to scold her; and I don't

know how you can talk such nonsense, Justinia. Of course, we are very sorry not to have Mr. Robarts; more especially as he was not here the last Sunday that Sir George was with us. I do like to see Mr. Robarts in his own church, certainly; and I don't like any other clergyman there as well. If Fanny takes that for scolding, why——"

"Oh! no, Lady Lufton; and it 's so kind of you to say so. But Mr. Robarts was so sorry that he had accepted this invitation to Chaldicotes, before he heard that Sir George was coming, and——"

"Oh, I know that Chaldicotes has great attractions which we cannot offer," said Lady Lufton.

"Indeed, it was not that. But he was asked to preach, you know; and Mr. Harold Smith——" Poor Fanny was only making it worse. Had she been worldly wise, she would have accepted the little compliment implied in Lady Lufton's first rebuke, and then have held her peace.

"Oh, yes; the Harold Smiths! They are irresistible, I know. How could any man refuse to join a party, graced both by Mrs. Harold Smith and Mrs. Proudie,—even though his duty should require him to stay away?"

"Now, mamma——" said Justinia.

"Well, my dear, what am I to say? You would not wish me to tell a fib. I don't like Mrs. Harold Smith,—at least, what I hear of her, for it has not been my fortune to meet her since her marriage. It may be conceited in me; but to own the truth, I think that Mr. Robarts would be better off with us at Framley than with the Harold Smiths at Chaldicotes,—even though Mrs. Proudie be thrown into the bargain."

It was nearly dark, and therefore the rising colour in the face of Mrs. Robarts could not be seen. She, however, was too good a wife to hear these things said without some anger within her bosom. She could blame her husband in her own mind; but it was intolerable to her that others should blame him in her hearing.

"He would undoubtedly be better off," she said; "but then, Lady Lufton, people can't always go exactly where they will be best off. Gentlemen sometimes must——"

"Well,—well, my dear, that will do. He has not taken you, at any rate; and so we will forgive him." And Lady Lufton kissed her. "As it is,"—and she affected a low whisper between the two young wives—"as it is, we must e'en put up with poor old Evan Jones. He is to be here to-night, and we must go and dress to receive him."

And so they went off. Lady Lufton was quite good enough at heart to like Mrs. Robarts all the better for standing up for her absent husband.

CHAPTER III.

CHALDICOTES.

CHALDICOTES is a house of much more pretension than Framley Court. Indeed, if one looks at the ancient marks about it, rather than at those of the present day, it is a place of very considerable pretension. There is an old forest, not altogether belonging to the property, but attached to it, called the Chase of Chaldicotes. A portion of this forest comes up close behind the mansion, and of itself gives a character and celebrity to the place. The Chase of Chaldicotes,—the greater part of it, at least,—is, as all the world knows, Crown property, and now, in these utilitarian days, is to be disforested. In former times it was a great forest, stretching half across the country, almost as far as Silverbridge; and there are bits of it, here and there, still to be seen at intervals throughout the whole distance; but the larger remaining portion, consisting of aged hollow oaks, centuries old, and wide-spreading withered beeches, stands in the two parishes of Chaldicotes and Uffley. People still come from afar to see the oaks of Chaldicotes, and to hear their feet rustle among the thick autumn leaves. But they will soon come no longer. The giants of past ages are to give way to wheat and turnips; a ruthless Chancellor of the Exchequer, disregarding old associations and rural

beauty, requires money returns from the lands; and the Chase of Chaldicotes is to vanish from the earth's surface.

Some part of it, however, is the private property of Mr. Sowerby, who hitherto, through all his pecuniary distresses, has managed to save from the axe and the auction-mart that portion of his paternal heritage. The house of Chaldicotes is a large stone building, probably of the time of Charles the Second. It is approached on both fronts by a heavy double flight of stone steps. In the front of the house a long, solemn, straight avenue through a double row of lime-trees, leads away to lodge-gates, which stand in the centre of the village of Chaldicotes; but to the rear the windows open upon four different vistas, which run down through the forest; four open green rides, which all converge together at a large iron gateway, the barrier which divides the private grounds from the Chase. The Sowerbys, for many generations, have been rangers of the Chase of Chaldicotes, thus having almost as wide an authority over the Crown forest as over their own. But now all this is to cease, for the forest will be disforested.

It was nearly dark as Mark Robarts drove up through the avenue of lime-trees to the hall-door; but it was easy to see that the house, which was dead and silent as the grave through nine months of the year, was now alive in all its parts. There were lights in many of the windows, and a noise of voices came from the stables, and servants were moving about, and dogs barked, and the dark gravel before the front steps was cut up with many a coach-wheel.

"Oh, be that you, sir, Mr. Robarts?" said a groom,

taking the parson's horse by the head, and touching his own hat. "I hope I see your reverence well?"

"Quite well, Bob, thank you. All well at Chaldicotes?"

"Pretty bobbish, Mr. Robarts. Deal of life going on here now, sir. The bishop and his lady came this morning."

"Oh,—ah,—yes! I understood they were to be here. Any of the young ladies?"

"One young lady. Miss Olivia, I think they call her, your reverence."

"And how 's Mr. Sowerby?"

"Very well, your reverence. He, and Mr. Harold Smith, and Mr. Fothergill,—that 's the duke's man of business, you know,—is getting off their horses now in the stable-yard there."

"Home from hunting,—eh, Bob?"

"Yes, sir; just home, this minute." And then Mr. Robarts walked into the house, his portmanteau following on a footboy's shoulder.

It will be seen that our young vicar was very intimate at Chaldicotes,—so much so that the groom knew him and talked to him about the people in the house. Yes; he was intimate there; much more than he had given the Framley people to understand. Not that he had wilfully and overtly deceived any one; not that he had ever spoken a false word about Chaldicotes. But he had never boasted at home that he and Sowerby were near allies. Neither had he told them there how often Mr. Sowerby and Lord Lufton were together in London. Why trouble women with such matters? Why annoy so excellent a woman as Lady Lufton? And then Mr. Sowerby was one whose intimacy few

young men would wish to reject. He was fifty, and had lived, perhaps, not the most salutary life; but he dressed young, and usually looked well. He was bald, with a good forehead, and sparkling moist eyes. He was a clever man, and a pleasant companion, and always good-humoured when it so suited him. He was a gentleman, too, of high breeding and good birth, whose ancestors had been known in that county,—longer, the farmers around would boast, than those of any other landowner in it, unless it be the Thornes of Ullathorne, or perhaps the Greshams of Greshamsbury, —much longer than the De Courcys at Courcy Castle. As for the Duke of Omnium, he, comparatively speaking, was a new man. And then Mr. Sowerby was a member of Parliament, a friend of some men in power and of others who might be there; a man who could talk about the world as one knowing the matter of which he talked. And moreover, whatever might be his ways of life at other times, when in the presence of a clergyman he rarely made himself offensive to clerical tastes. He neither swore, nor brought his vices on the carpet, nor sneered at the faith of the church. If he was no churchman himself, he at least knew how to live with those who were.

How was it possible that such a one as our vicar should not relish the intimacy of Mr. Sowerby? It might be very well, he would say to himself, for a woman like Lady Lufton to turn up her nose at him, —for Lady Lufton, who spent ten months of the year at Framley Court, and who during those ten months, and for the matter of that, during the two months also which she spent in London, saw no one out of her own set. Women did not understand such things, the vicar

said to himself; even his own wife,—good, and nice, and sensible, and intelligent as she was,—even she did not understand that a man in the world must meet all sorts of men; and that in these days it did not do for a clergyman to be a hermit. 'T was thus that Mark Robarts argued when he found himself called upon to defend himself before the bar of his own conscience for going to Chaldicotes and increasing his intimacy with Mr. Sowerby. He did know that Mr. Sowerby was a dangerous man; he was aware that he was over head and ears in debt, and that he had already entangled young Lord Lufton in some pecuniary embarrassment; his conscience did tell him that it would be well for him, as one of Christ's soldiers, to look out for companions of a different stamp. But nevertheless he went to Chaldicotes, not satisfied with himself indeed, but repeating to himself a great many arguments why he should be so satisfied.

He was shown into the drawing-room at once, and there he found Mrs. Harold Smith, with Mrs. and Miss Proudie, and a lady whom he had never before seen, and whose name he did not at first hear mentioned.

"Is that Mr. Robarts?" said Mrs. Harold Smith, getting up to greet him, and screening her pretended ignorance under the veil of the darkness. "And have you really driven over four-and-twenty miles of Barsetshire roads on such a day as this to assist us in our little difficulties? Well, we can promise you gratitude at any rate." And then the vicar shook hands with Mrs. Proudie, in that deferential manner which is due from a vicar to his bishop's wife; and Mrs. Proudie returned the greeting with all that smiling condescension which a bishop's wife should show to a vicar.

Miss Proudie was not quite so civil. Had Mr. Robarts been still unmarried, she also could have smiled sweetly; but she had been exercising smiles on clergymen too long to waste them now on a married parish parson.

"And what are the difficulties, Mrs. Smith, in which I am to assist you?"

"We have six or seven gentlemen here, Mr. Robarts, and they always go out hunting before breakfast, and they never come back,—I was going to say till after dinner. I wish it were so, for then we should not have to wait for them."

"Excepting Mr. Supplehouse, you know," said the unknown lady, in a loud voice.

"And he is generally shut up in the library, writing articles."

"He 'd be better employed if he were trying to break his neck like the others," said the unknown lady.

"Only he would never succeed," said Mrs. Harold Smith. "But perhaps, Mr. Robarts, you are as bad as the rest; perhaps you, too, will be hunting to-morrow."

"My dear Mrs. Smith!" said Mrs. Proudie, in a tone denoting slight reproach, and modified horror.

"Oh! I forgot. No, of course, you won't be hunting, Mr. Robarts; you 'll only be wishing that you could."

"Why can't he?" said the lady with a loud voice.

"My dear Miss Dunstable! a clergyman hunt, while he is staying in the same house with the bishop? Think of the proprieties!"

"Oh,—ah! The bishop would n't like it,—would n't he? Now, do tell me, sir, what would the bishop do to you if you did hunt?"

"It would depend upon his mood at the time, madam," said Mr. Robarts. "If that were very stern, he might perhaps have me beheaded before the palace gates."

Mrs. Proudie drew herself up in her chair, showing that she did not like the tone of the conversation; and Miss Proudie fixed her eyes vehemently on her book, showing that Miss Dunstable and her conversation were both beneath her notice.

"If these gentlemen do not mean to break their necks to-night," said Mrs. Harold Smith, "I wish they 'd let us know it. It 's half-past six already." And then Mr. Robarts gave them to understand that no such catastrophe could be looked for that day, as Mr. Sowerby and the other sportsmen were within the stable-yard when he entered the door.

"Then, ladies, we may as well dress," said Mrs. Harold Smith. But as she moved towards the door, it opened, and a short gentleman, with a slow, quiet step, entered the room; but was not yet to be distinguished through the dusk by the eyes of Mr. Robarts. "Oh! bishop, is that you?" said Mrs. Smith. "Here is one of the luminaries of your diocese." And then the bishop, feeling through the dark, made his way up to the vicar and shook him cordially by the hand. "He was delighted to meet Mr. Robarts at Chaldicotes," he said;—"quite delighted. Was he not going to preach on behalf of the Papuan Mission next Sunday? Ah! so he, the bishop, had heard. It was a good work, an excellent work." And then Dr. Proudie expressed himself as much grieved that he could not remain at Chaldicotes and hear the sermon. It was plain that his bishop thought no ill of him on account

of his intimacy with Mr. Sowerby. But then he felt in his own heart that he did not much regard his bishop's opinion.

"Ah, Robarts, I 'm delighted to see you," said Mr. Sowerby, when they met on the drawing-room rug before dinner. "You know Harold Smith? Yes, of course you do. Well, who else is there? Oh! Supplehouse. Mr. Supplehouse, allow me to introduce to you my friend Mr. Robarts. It is he who will extract the five-pound note out of your pocket next Sunday for these poor Papuans whom we are going to Christianize. That is, if Harold Smith does not finish the work out of hand at his Saturday lecture. And, Robarts, you have seen the bishop, of course:" this he said in a whisper. "A fine thing to be a bishop, is n't it? I wish I had half your chance. But, my dear fellow, I 've made such a mistake; I have n't got a bachelor parson for Miss Proudie. You must help me out, and take her in to dinner." And then the great gong sounded, and off they went in pairs.

At dinner Mark found himself seated between Miss Proudie and the lady whom he had heard named as Miss Dunstable. Of the former he was not very fond, and, in spite of his host's petition, was not inclined to play bachelor parson for her benefit. With the other lady he would willingly have chatted during the dinner, only that everybody else at table seemed to be intent on doing the same thing. She was neither young, nor beautiful, nor peculiarly ladylike; yet she seemed to enjoy a popularity which must have excited the envy of Mr. Supplehouse, and which certainly was not altogether to the taste of Mrs. Proudie,—who, however, fêted her as much as did the others. So that our

clergyman found himself unable to obtain more than an inconsiderable share of the lady's attention.

"Bishop," said the lady, speaking across the table, "we have missed you so all day! we have had no one on earth to say a word to us."

"My dear Miss Dunstable, had I known that——! But I really was engaged on business of some importance."

"I don't believe in business of importance; do you, Mrs. Smith?"

"Do I not?" said Mrs. Smith. "If you were married to Mr. Harold Smith for one week, you 'd believe in it."

"Should I now? What a pity that I can't have that chance of improving my faith! But you are a man of business, also;—Mr. Supplehouse; so they tell me." And she turned to her neighbour on her right hand.

"I cannot compare myself to Harold Smith," said he. "But perhaps I may equal the bishop."

"What does a man do, now, when he sits himself down to business? How does he set about it? What are his tools? A quire of blotting-paper, I suppose, to begin with?"

"That depends, I should say, on his trade. A shoemaker begins by waxing his thread."

"And Mr. Harold Smith——?"

"By counting up his yesterday's figures, generally, I should say; or else by unrolling a ball of red tape. Well-docketed papers and statistical facts are his forte."

"And what does a bishop do? Can you tell me that?"

"He sends forth to his clergy either blessings or

blowings-up, according to the state of his digestive organs. But Mrs. Proudie can explain all that to you with the greatest accuracy."

"Can she now? I understand what you mean, but I don't believe a word of it. The bishop manages his own affairs himself, quite as much as you do, or Mr. Harold Smith."

"I, Miss Dunstable?"

"Yes, you."

"But I, unluckily, have not a wife to manage them for me."

"Then you should not laugh at those who have, for you don't know what you may come to yourself when you 're married."

Mr. Supplehouse began to make a pretty speech, saying that he would be delighted to incur any danger in that respect to which he might be subjected by the companionship of Miss Dunstable. But before he was half through it, she had turned her back upon him, and begun a conversation with Mark Robarts.

"Have you much work in your parish, Mr. Robarts?" she asked. Now, Mark was not aware that she knew his name, or the fact of his having a parish, and was rather surprised by the question. And he had not quite liked the tone in which she had seemed to speak of the bishop and his work. His desire for her further acquaintance was therefore somewhat moderated, and he was not prepared to answer her question with much zeal.

"All parish clergymen have plenty of work, if they choose to do it."

"Ah, that is it; is it not, Mr. Robarts? If they choose to do it? A great many do;—many that I

know, do; and see what a result they have. But many neglect it,—and see what a result *they* have. I think it ought to be the happiest life that a man can lead, that of a parish clergyman, with a wife and family and a sufficient income."

"I think it is," said Mark Robarts, asking himself whether the contentment accruing to him from such blessings had made him satisfied at all points. He had all these things of which Miss Dunstable spoke, and yet he had told his wife, the other day, that he could not afford to neglect the acquaintance of a rising politician like Harold Smith.

"What I find fault with is this," continued Miss Dunstable, "that we expect clergymen to do their duty, and don't give them a sufficient income,—give them hardly any income at all. Is it not a scandal, that an educated gentleman with a family should be made to work half his life, and perhaps the whole, for a pittance of seventy pounds a year?" Mark said that it was a scandal, and thought of Mr. Evan Jones and his daughter; and thought also of his own worth, and his own house, and his own nine hundred a year.

"And yet you clergymen are so proud,—aristoaratic would be the genteel word, I know,—that you won't take the money of common, ordinary poor people. You must be paid from land and endowments, from tithe and church property. You can't bring yourself to work for what you earn, as lawyers and doctors do. It is better that curates should starve than undergo such ignominy as that!"

"It is a long subject, Miss Dunstable."

"A very long one; and that means that I am not to say any more about it."

"I did not mean that exactly."

"Oh, but you did though, Mr. Robarts. And I can take a hint of that kind when I get it. You clergymen like to keep those long subjects for your sermons, when no one can answer you. Now, if I have a longing heart's desire for anything at all in this world, it is to be able to get up into a pulpit and preach a sermon."

"You can't conceive how soon that appetite would pall upon you, after its first indulgence."

"That would depend upon whether I could get people to listen to me. It does not pall upon Mr. Spurgeon, I suppose." Then her attention was called away by some question from Mr. Sowerby, and Mark Robarts found himself bound to address his conversation to Miss Proudie. Miss Proudie, however, was not thankful, and gave him little but monosyllables for his pains.

"Of course you know Harold Smith is going to give us a lecture about these islanders," Mr. Sowerby said to him, as they sat round the fire over their wine after dinner. Mark said that he had been so informed, and should be delighted to be one of the listeners.

"You are bound to do that, as he is going to listen to you the day afterwards,—or, at any rate, to pretend to do so, which is as much as you will do for him. It 'll be a terrible bore,—the lecture, I mean, not the sermon." And he spoke very low into his friend's ear. "Fancy having to drive ten miles after dusk, and ten miles back, to hear Harold Smith talk for two hours about Borneo! One must do it, you know."

"I dare say it will be very interesting."

"My dear fellow, you have n't undergone so many

of these things as I have. But he 's right to do it. It 's his line of life; and when a man begins a thing he ought to go on with it. Where 's Lufton all this time?"

"In Scotland, when I last heard from him; but he 's probably at Melton now."

"It 's deuced shabby of him, not hunting here in his own county. He escapes all the bore of going to lectures, and giving feeds to the neighbours; that 's why he treats us so. He has no idea of his duty, has he?"

"Lady Lufton does all that, you know."

"I wish I 'd a Mrs. Sowerby *mère* to do it for me. But then Lufton has no constituents to look after—lucky dog! By-the-bye, has he spoken to you about selling that outlying bit of land of his in Oxfordshire? It belongs to the Lufton property, and yet it does n't. In my mind it gives more trouble than it 's worth." Lord Lufton had spoken to Mark about this sale, and had explained to him that such a sacrifice was absolutely necessary, in consequence of certain pecuniary transactions between him, Lord Lufton, and Mr. Sowerby. But it was found impracticable to complete the business without Lady Lufton's knowledge, and her son had commissioned Mr. Robarts not only to inform her ladyship, but to talk her over, and to appease her wrath. This commission he had not yet attempted to execute, and it was probable that this visit to Chaldicotes would not do much to facilitate the business.

"They are the most magnificent islands under the sun," said Harold Smith to the bishop.

"Are they, indeed?" said the bishop, opening his eyes wide, and assuming a look of intense interest.

"And the most intelligent people."

"Dear me!" said the bishop.

"All they want is guidance, encouragement, instruction——"

"And Christianity," suggested the bishop.

"And Christianity, of course," said Mr. Smith, remembering that he was speaking to a dignitary of the Church. It was well to humour such people, Mr. Smith thought. But the Christianity was to be done in the Sunday sermon, and was not part of his work.

"And how do you intend to begin with them?" asked Mr. Supplehouse, the business of whose life it had been to suggest difficulties.

"Begin with them,—oh,—why,—it 's very easy to begin with them. The difficulty is to go on with them after the money is all spent. We 'll begin by explaining to them the benefits of civilization."

"Capital plan!" said Mr. Supplehouse. "But how do you set about it, Smith?"

"How do we set about it? How did we set about it with Australia and America? It is very easy to criticise; but in such matters the great thing is to put one's shoulder to the wheel."

"We sent our felons to Australia," said Supplehouse, "and they began the work for us. And as to America, we exterminated the people instead of civilizing them."

"We did not exterminate the inhabitants of India," said Harold Smith, angrily.

"Nor have we attempted to Christianize them, as the bishop so properly wishes to do with your islanders."

"Supplehouse, you are not fair," said Mr. Sowerby, "neither to Harold Smith nor to us;—you are making him rehearse his lecture, which is bad for him; and making us hear the rehearsal, which is bad for us."

"Supplehouse belongs to a clique which monopolizes the wisdom of England," said Harold Smith, "or, at any rate, thinks that it does. But the worst of them is that they are given to talk leading articles."

"Better that than talk articles which are not leading," said Mr. Supplehouse. "Some first-class official men do that."

"Shall I meet you at the duke's next week, Mr. Robarts?" said the bishop to him, soon after they had gone into the drawing-room. Meet him at the duke's! —the established enemy of Barsetshire mankind, as Lady Lufton regarded his grace! No idea of going to the duke's had ever entered our hero's mind; nor had he been aware that the duke was about to entertain any one.

"No, my lord; I think not. Indeed, I have no acquaintance with his grace."

"Oh,—ah! I did not know. Because Mr. Sowerby is going; and so are the Harold Smiths, and, I think, Mr. Supplehouse. An excellent man is the duke;—that is, as regards all the county interests," added the bishop, remembering that the moral character of his bachelor grace was not the very best in the world. And then his lordship began to ask some questions about the church affairs of Framley, in which a little interest as to Framley Court was also mixed up, when he was interrupted by a rather sharp voice, to which he instantly attended.

"Bishop," said the rather sharp voice; and the bishop trotted across the room to the back of the sofa, on which his wife was sitting; "Miss Dunstable thinks that she will be able to come to us for a couple of days, after we leave the duke's."

"I shall be delighted above all things," said the bishop, bowing low to the dominant lady of the day. For, be it known to all men that Miss Dunstable was the great heiress of that name.

"Mrs. Proudie is so very kind as to say that she will take me in, with my poodle, parrot, and pet old woman."

"I tell Miss Dunstable that we shall have quite room for any of her suite," said Mrs. Proudie. "And that it will give us no trouble."

"'The labour we delight in physics pain,'" said the gallant bishop, bowing low, and putting his hand upon his heart. In the meantime Mr. Fothergill had got hold of Mark Robarts. Mr. Fothergill was a gentleman and a magistrate of the county, but he occupied the position of managing-man on the Duke of Omnium's estates. He was not exactly his agent; that is to say, he did not receive his rents; but he "managed" for him, saw people, went about the county, wrote letters, supported the electioneering interest, did popularity when it was too much trouble for the duke to do it himself, and was, in fact, invaluable. People in West Barsetshire would often say that they did not know what *on earth* the duke would do, if it were not for Mr. Fothergill. Indeed, Mr. Fothergill was useful to the duke.

"Mr. Robarts," he said, "I am very happy to have the pleasure of meeting you,—very happy indeed. I have often heard of you from our friend Sowerby." Mark bowed, and said that he was delighted to have the honour of making Mr. Fothergill's acquaintance. "I am commissioned by the Duke of Omnium," continued Mr. Fothergill, "to say how glad he will be if

you will join his grace's party at Gatherum Castle next week. The bishop will be there, and indeed nearly the whole set who are here now. The duke would have written when he heard that you were to be at Chaldicotes; but things were hardly quite arranged then, so his grace has left it for me to tell you how happy he will be to make your acquaintance in his own house. I have spoken to Sowerby," continued Mr. Fothergill, "and he very much hopes that you will be able to join us."

Mark felt that his face became red when this proposition was made to him. The party in the county to which he properly belonged,—he and his wife, and all that made him happy and respectable,—looked upon the Duke of Omnium with horror and amazement; and now he had absolutely received an invitation to the duke's house. A proposition was made to him that he should be numbered among the duke's friends!

And though in one sense he was sorry that the proposition was made to him, yet in another he was proud of it. It is not every young man, let his profession be what it may, who can receive overtures of friendship from dukes without some elation. Mark, too, had risen in the world, as far as he had yet risen, by knowing great people; and he certainly had an ambition to rise higher. I will not degrade him by calling him a tuft-hunter; but he undoubtedly had a feeling that the paths most pleasant for a clergyman's feet were those which were trodden by the great ones of the earth. Nevertheless, at the moment he declined the duke's invitation. He was very much flattered, he said, but the duties of his parish would require him to return direct from Chaldicotes to Framley.

"You need not give me an answer to-night, you know," said Mr. Fothergill. "Before the week is past, we will talk it over with Sowerby and the bishop. It will be a thousand pities, Mr. Robarts, if you will allow me to say so, that you should neglect such an opportunity of knowing his grace."

When Mark went to bed, his mind was still set against going to the duke's; but, nevertheless, he did feel that it was a pity that he should not do so. After all, was it necessary that he should obey Lady Lufton in all things?

CHAPTER IV.

A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE.

It is no doubt very wrong to long after a naughty thing. Nevertheless we all do long. One may say that hankering after naughty things is the very essence of the evil into which we have been precipitated by Adam's fall. When we confess that we are all sinners, we confess that we all long after naughty things. And ambition is a great vice,—as Mark Antony told us a long time ago,—a great vice, no doubt, if the ambition of the man be with reference to his own advancement, and not to the advancement of others. But then, how many of us are there who are not ambitious in this vicious manner? And there is nothing viler than the desire to know great people,—people of great rank, I should say; nothing worse than the hunting of titles and worshipping of wealth. We all know this, and say it every day of our lives. But presuming that a way into the society of Park Lane were open to us, and a way also into that of Bedford Row, how many of us are there who would prefer Bedford Row because it is so vile to worship wealth and title?

I am led into these rather trite remarks by the necessity of putting forward some sort of excuse for that frame of mind in which the Rev. Mark Robarts awoke on the morning after his arrival at Chaldicotes. And

I trust that the fact of his being a clergyman will not be allowed to press against him unfairly. Clergymen are subject to the same passions as other men; and, as far as I can see, give way to them, in one line or in another, almost as frequently. Every clergyman should, by canonical rule, feel a personal disinclination to a bishopric; but yet we do not believe that such personal disinclination is generally strong. Mark's first thoughts when he woke on that morning flew back to Mr. Fothergill's invitation. The duke had sent a special message to say how peculiarly glad he, the duke, would be to make acquaintance with him, the parson! How much of this message had been of Mr. Fothergill's own manufacture, that Mark Robarts did not consider. He had obtained a living at an age when other young clergymen are beginning to think of a curacy, and he had obtained such a living as middle-aged parsons in their dreams regard as a possible paradise for their old years. Of course he thought that all these good things had been the results of his own peculiar merits. Of course he felt that he was different from other parsons,—more fitted by nature for intimacy with great persons, more urbane, more polished, and more richly endowed with modern clerical well-to-do aptitudes. He was grateful to Lady Lufton for what she had done for him; but perhaps not so grateful as he should have been.

At any rate he was not Lady Lufton's servant, nor even her dependant. So much he had repeated to himself on many occasions, and had gone so far as to hint the same idea to his wife. In his career as parish priest he must in most things be the judge of his own actions,—and in many also it was his duty to be the

judge of those of his patroness. The fact of Lady Lufton having placed him in the living could by no means make her the proper judge of his actions. This he often said to himself;—and he said as often that Lady Lufton certainly had a hankering after such a judgment-seat.

Of whom generally did prime ministers and official big-wigs think it expedient to make bishops and deans? Was it not, as a rule, of those clergymen who had shown themselves able to perform their clerical duties efficiently, and able also to take their place with ease in high society? He was very well off certainly at Framley; but he could never hope for anything beyond Framley if he allowed himself to regard Lady Lufton as a bugbear. Putting Lady Lufton and her prejudices out of the question, was there any reason why he ought not to accept the duke's invitation? He could not see that there was any such reason. If any one could be a better judge on such a subject than himself, it must be his bishop. And it was clear that the bishop wished him to go to Gatherum Castle.

The matter was still left open to him. Mr. Fothergill had especially explained that; and therefore his ultimate decision was as yet within his own power. Such a visit would cost him some money, for he knew that a man does not stay at great houses without expense; and then, in spite of his good income, he was not very flush of money. He had been down this year with Lord Lufton in Scotland. Perhaps it might be more prudent for him to return home. But then an idea came to him that it behoved him as a man and a priest to break through that Framley thraldom under which he felt that he did to a certain extent

exist. Was it not the fact that he was about to decline this invitation from fear of Lady Lufton? And if so, was that a motive by which he ought to be actuated? It was incumbent on him to rid himself of that feeling. And in this spirit he got up and dressed.

There was hunting again on that day; and as the hounds were to meet near Chaldicotes, and to draw some coverts lying on the verge of the Chase, the ladies were to go in carriages through the drives of the forest, and Mr. Robarts was to escort them on horseback. Indeed, it was one of those hunting-days got up rather for the ladies than for the sport. Great nuisances they are to steady, middle-aged hunting men; but the young fellows like them because they have thereby an opportunity of showing off their sporting finery and of doing a little flirtation on horseback. The bishop, also, had been minded to be of the party; so, at least, he had said on the previous evening; and a place in one of the carriages had been set apart for him: but since that, he and Mrs. Proudie had discussed the matter in private, and at breakfast his lordship declared that he had changed his mind.

Mr. Sowerby was one of those men who are known to be very poor,—as poor as debt can make a man,—but who, nevertheless, enjoy all the luxuries which money can give. It was believed that he could not live in England out of jail but for his protection as a member of Parliament; and yet it seemed that there was no end to his horses and carriages, his servants and retinue. He had been at this work for a great many years, and practice, they say, makes perfect. Such companions are very dangerous. There is no cholera, no yellow-fever, no small-pox, more conta-

gious than debt. If one lives habitually among embarrassed men, one catches it to a certainty. No one had injured the community in this way more fatally than Mr. Sowerby. But still he carried on the game himself; and now, on this morning, carriages and horses thronged at his gate, as though he were as substantially rich as his friend the Duke of Omnium.

"Robarts, my dear fellow," said Mr. Sowerby, when they were well under way down one of the glades of the forest,—for the place where the hounds met was some four or five miles from the house of Chaldicotes,—"ride on with me a moment. I want to speak to you; and if I stay behind we shall never get to the hounds." So Mark, who had come expressly to escort the ladies, rode on alongside of Mr. Sowerby in his pink coat.

"My dear fellow, Fothergill tells me that you have some hesitation about going to Gatherum Castle."

"Well, I decline, certainly. You know I am not a man of pleasure, as you are. I have some duties to attend to."

"Gammon!" said Mr. Sowerby; and as he said it, he looked with a kind of derisive smile into the clergyman's face.

"It is easy enough to say that, Sowerby; and perhaps I have no right to expect that you should understand me."

"Ah, but I do understand you; and I say it is gammon. I would be the last man in the world to ridicule your scruples about duty, if this hesitation on your part arose from any such scruple. But answer me honestly, do you not know that such is not the case?"

"I know nothing of the kind."

"Ah, but I think you do. If you persist in refusing this invitation will it not be because you are afraid of making Lady Lufton angry? I do not know what there can be in that woman that she is able to hold both you and Lufton in leading-strings." Robarts, of course, denied the charge, and protested that he was not to be taken back to his own parsonage by any fear of Lady Lufton. But though he made such protest with warmth, he knew that he did so ineffectually. Sowerby only smiled, and said that the proof of the pudding was in the eating.

"What is the good of a man keeping a curate if it be not to save him from that sort of drudgery?" he asked.

"Drudgery! If I were a drudge how could I be here to-day?"

"Well, Robarts, look here. I am speaking now, perhaps, with more of the energy of an old friend than circumstances fully warrant; but I am an older man than you, and as I have a regard for you I do not like to see you throw up a good game when it is in your hands."

"Oh, as far as that goes, Sowerby, I need hardly tell you that I appreciate your kindness."

"If you are content," continued the man of the world, "to live at Framley all your life, and to warm yourself in the sunshine of the dowager there, why, in such case, it may perhaps be useless for you to extend the circle of your friends; but if you have higher ideas than these, you will be very wrong to omit the present opportunity of going to the duke's. I never knew the duke go so much out of his way to be civil to a clergyman as he has done in this instance."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to him."

"The fact is, that you may, if you please, make yourself popular in the county; but you cannot do it by obeying all Lady Lufton's behests. She is a dear old woman, I am sure."

"She is, Sowerby; and you would say so, if you knew her."

"I don't doubt it; but it would not do for you or me to live exactly according to her ideas. Now, here, in this case, the bishop of the diocese is to be one of the party, and he has, I believe, already expressed a wish that you should be another."

"He asked me if I were going."

"Exactly; and Archdeacon Grantly will be there."

"Will he?" asked Mark. Now, that would be a great point gained, for Archdeacon Grantly was a close friend of Lady Lufton.

"So I understand from Fothergill. Indeed, it will be very wrong of you not to go. I tell you so plainly. And, what is more, when you talk about your duty,—you having a curate as you have,—why, it is gammon." These last words he spoke looking back over his shoulder as he stood up in his stirrups, for he had caught the eye of the huntsman, who was surrounded by his hounds, and was now trotting on to join him. During a great portion of the day, Mark found himself riding by the side of Mrs. Proudie, as that lady leaned back in her carriage. And Mrs. Proudie smiled on him graciously, though her daughter would not do so. Mrs. Proudie was fond of having an attendant clergyman; and as it was evident that Mr. Robarts lived among nice people,—titled dowagers, members of Parliament, and people of that sort,—she was quite

willing to install him as a sort of honorary chaplain *pro tem.*

"I 'll tell you what we have settled, Mrs. Harold Smith and I," said Mrs. Proudie to him. "This lecture at Barchester will be so late on Saturday evening, that you had all better come and dine with us." Mark bowed and thanked her, and declared that he should be very happy to make one of such a party. Even Lady Lufton could not object to this, although she was not especially fond of Mrs. Proudie.

"And then they are to sleep at the hotel. It will really be too late for ladies to think of going back so far at this time of the year. I told Mrs. Harold Smith, and Miss Dunstable, too, that we could manage to make room at any rate for them. But they will not leave the other ladies; so they go to the hotel for that night. But, Mr. Robarts, the bishop will never allow you to stay at the inn, so of course you will take a bed at the palace."

It immediately occurred to Mark that as the lecture was to be given on Saturday evening, the next morning would be Sunday; and, on that Sunday, he would have to preach at Chaldicotes. "I thought they were all going to return the same night," said he.

"Well, they did intend it; but you see Mrs. Smith is afraid."

"I should have to get back here on the Sunday morning, Mrs. Proudie."

"Ah, yes, that is bad,—very bad indeed. No one dislikes any interference with the Sabbath more than I do. Indeed, if I am particular about anything it is about that. But some works are works of necessity, Mr. Robarts; are they not? Now you must neces-

sarily be back at Chaldicotes on Sunday morning!" And so the matter was settled. Mrs. Proudie was very firm in general in the matter of Sabbath-day observances; but when she had to deal with such persons as Mrs. Harold Smith, it was expedient that she should give way a little. "You can start as soon as it 's daylight, you know, if you like it, Mr. Robarts," said Mrs. Proudie.

There was not much to boast of as to the hunting, but it was a very pleasant day for the ladies. The men rode up and down the grass rides through the Chase, sometimes in the greatest possible hurry as though they never could go quick enough; and then the coachmen would drive very fast also, though they did not know why, for a fast pace of movement is another of those contagious diseases. And then again the sportsmen would move at an undertaker's pace, when the fox had traversed and the hounds would be at a loss to know which was the hunt and which was the heel; and then the carriage also would go slowly, and the ladies would stand up and talk. And then the time for lunch came; and altogether the day went by pleasantly enough.

"And so that 's hunting, is it?" said Miss Dunstable.

"Yes, that 's hunting," said Mr. Sowerby.

"I did not see any gentleman do anything that I could not do myself,—except there was one young man slipped off into the mud; and I should n't like that."

"But there was no breaking of bones, was there, my dear?" said Mrs. Harold Smith.

"And nobody caught any foxes," said Miss Dunstable. "The fact is, Mrs. Smith, that I don't think

much more of their sport than I do of their business. I shall take to hunting a pack of hounds myself after this."

"Do, my dear, and I 'll be your whipper-in. I wonder whether Mrs. Proudie would join us."

"I shall be writing to the duke to-night," said Mr. Fothergill to Mark, as they were all riding up to the stable-yard together. "You will let me tell his grace that you will accept his invitation,—will you not?"

"Upon my word, the duke is very kind," said Mark.

"He is very anxious to know you, I can assure you," said Fothergill. What could a young flattered fool of a parson do, but say that he would go? Mark did say that he would go; and in the course of the evening his friend Mr. Sowerby congratulated him, and the bishop joked with him and said that he knew that he would not give up good company so soon; and Miss Dunstable said she would make him her chaplain as soon as Parliament would allow quack doctors to have such articles,—an allusion which Mark did not understand till he learned that Miss Dunstable was herself the proprietress of the celebrated Oil of Lebanon, invented by her late respected father, and patented by him with such wonderful results in the way of accumulated fortune; and Mrs. Proudie made him quite one of their party, talking to him about all manner of church subjects; and then at last, even Miss Proudie smiled on him, when she learned that he had been thought worthy of a bed at a duke's castle. And all the world seemed to be open to him.

But he could not make himself happy that evening. On the next morning he must write to his wife; and he could already see the look of painful sorrow which

would fall upon his Fanny's brow when she learned that her husband was going to be a guest at the Duke of Omnium's. And he must tell her to send him money, and money was scarce. And then, as to Lady Lufton, should he send her some message, or should he not? In either case he must declare war against her. And then did he not owe everything to Lady Lufton? And thus in spite of all his triumphs he could not get himself to bed in a happy frame of mind.

On the next day, which was Friday, he postponed the disagreeable task of writing. Saturday would do as well; and on Saturday morning, before they all started for Barchester, he did write. And his letter ran as follows:—

"Chaldicotes, November, 185—.

"Dearest Love,—You will be astonished when I tell you how gay we all are here, and what further dissipations are in store for us. The Arabins, as you supposed, are not of our party; but the Proudies are,—as you supposed also. Your suppositions are always right. And what will you think when I tell you that I am to sleep at the palace on Saturday? You know that there is to be a lecture in Barchester on that day. Well; we must all go, of course, as Harold Smith, one of our set here, is to give it. And now it turns out that we cannot get back the same night because there is no moon; and Mrs. Bishop would not allow that my cloth should be contaminated by an hotel;—very kind and considerate, is it not?

"But I have a more astounding piece of news for you than this. There is to be a great party at Gatherum Castle next week, and they have talked me over into accepting an invitation which the duke sent ex-

pressly to me. I refused at first; but everybody here said that my doing so would be so strange; and then they all wanted to know my reason. When I came to consider it, I did not know what reason I had to give. The bishop is going, and he thought it very odd that I should not go also, seeing that I was asked. I know what my own darling will think, and I know that she will not be pleased, and I must put off my defence till I return to her from this ogre-land,—if ever I do get back alive. But joking apart, Fanny, I think that I should have been wrong to stand out, when so much was said about it. I should have been seeming to take upon myself to sit in judgment upon the duke. I doubt if there be a single clergyman in the diocese, under fifty years of age, who would have refused the invitation under such circumstances,—unless it be Crawley, who is so mad on the subject that he thinks it almost wrong to take a walk out of his own parish. I must stay at Gatherum Castle over Sunday week; —indeed, we only go there on Friday. I have written to Jones about the duties. I can make it up to him, as I know he wishes to go into Wales at Christmas. My wanderings will all be over then, and he may go for a couple of months if he pleases. I suppose you will take my classes in the school on Sunday, as well as your own; but pray make them have a good fire. If this is too much for you, make Mrs. Podgens take the boys. Indeed, I think that will be better.

"Of course you will tell her ladyship of my whereabouts. Tell her from me, that as regards the bishop, as well as regarding another great personage, the colour has been laid on perhaps a little too thickly. Not that Lady Lufton would ever like him. Make her under-

stand that my going to the duke's has almost become a matter of conscience with me. I have not known how to make it appear that it would be right for me to refuse, without absolutely making a party matter of it. I saw that it would be said that I, coming from Lady Lufton's parish, could not go to the Duke of Omnium's. This I did not choose.

"I find that I shall want a little more money before I leave here, five or ten pounds,—say ten pounds. If you cannot spare it, get it from Davis. He owes me more than that, a good deal. And now, God bless and preserve you, my own love. Kiss my darling bairns for papa, and give them my blessing.

"Always and ever your own,

"M. R."

And then there was written, on an outside scrap which was folded round the full-written sheet of paper, "Make it as smooth at Framley Court as possible." However strong, and reasonable, and unanswerable the body of Mark's letter may have been, all his hesitation, weakness, doubt, and fear were expressed in this short postscript.

CHAPTER V.

AMANTIUM IRÆ AMORIS INTEGRATIO."

And now, with my reader's consent, I will follow the postman with that letter to Framley; not by its own circuitous route indeed, or by the same mode of conveyance; for that letter went into Barchester by the Courcy night mail-cart, which, on its road, passes through the villages of Uffley and Chaldicotes, reaching Barchester in time for the up mail-train to London. By that train, the letter was sent towards the metropolis as far as the junction of the Barset branch line, but there it was turned in its course, and came down again by the main line as far as Silverbridge; at which place, between six and seven in the morning, it was shouldered by the Framley footpost messenger, and in due course delivered at the Framley Parsonage exactly as Mrs. Robarts had finished reading prayers to the four servants. Or, I should say rather, that such would in its usual course have been that letter's destiny. As it was, however, it reached Silverbridge on Sunday, and lay there till the Monday, as the Framley people have declined their Sunday post. And then again, when the letter was delivered at the parsonage, on that wet Monday morning, Mrs. Robarts was not at home. As we are all aware, she was staying with her ladyship at Framley Court.

"Oh, but it 's mortial wet," said the shivering postman as he handed in that and the vicar's newspaper. The vicar was a man of the world, and took the Jupiter.

"Come in, Robin postman, and warm theeself awhile," said Jemima the cook, pushing a stool a little to one side, but still well in front of the big kitchen fire.

"Well, I dudna jist know how it 'll be. The wery 'edges 'as eyes and tells on me in Silverbridge, if I so much as stops to pick a blackberry."

"There bain't no hedges here, mon, nor yet no blackberries; so sit thee down and warm theeself. That 's better nor blackberries, I 'm thinking," and she handed him a bowl of tea with a slice of buttered toast. Robin postman took the proffered tea, put his dripping hat on the ground, and thanked Jemima cook. "I dudna jist know how it 'll be," said he; "only it do pour so tarnation heavy." Which among us, O my readers, could have withstood that temptation?

Such was the circuitous course of Mark's letter; but as it left Chaldicotes on Saturday evening, and reached Mrs. Robarts on the following morning, or would have done, but for that intervening Sunday, doing all its peregrinations during the night, it may be held that its course of transport was not inconveniently arranged. We, however, will travel by a much shorter route. Robin, in the course of his daily travels, passed, first the post-office at Framley, then the Framley Court back entrance, and then the vicar's house, so that on this wet morning Jemima cook was not able to make use of his services in transporting this letter back to her mistress; for Robin had got another village before him, expectant of its letters.

"Why did n't thee leave it, mon, with Mr. Applejohn at the Court?" Mr. Applejohn was the butler who took the letter-bag. "Thee know'st as how missus was there." And then Robin, mindful of the tea and toast, explained to her courteously how the law made it imperative on him to bring the letter to the very house that was indicated, let the owner of the letter be where she might; and he laid down the law very satisfactorily with sundry long-worded quotations. Not to much effect, however, for the housemaid called him an oaf; and Robin would decidedly have had the worst of it had not the gardener come in and taken his part. "They women knows nothin', and understands nothin'," said the gardener. "Give us hold of the letter. I 'll take it up to the house. It 's the master's fist." And then Robin postman went on one way, and the gardener, he went the other. The gardener never disliked an excuse for going up to the Court gardens, even on so wet a day as this.

Mrs. Robarts was sitting over the drawing-room fire with Lady Meredith when her husband's letter was brought to her. The Framley Court letter-bag had been discussed at breakfast; but that was now nearly an hour since, and Lady Lufton, as was her wont, was away in her own room writing her own letters, and looking after her own matters; for Lady Lufton was a person who dealt in figures herself, and understood business almost as well as Harold Smith. And on that morning she also had received a letter which had displeased her not a little. Whence arose this displeasure neither Mrs. Robarts nor Lady Meredith knew; but her ladyship's brow had grown black at breakfast-time; she had bundled up an ominous-looking epistle into

her bag without speaking of it, and had left the room immediately that breakfast was over.

"There 's something wrong," said Sir George.

"Mamma does fret herself so much about Ludovic's money matters," said Lady Meredith. Ludovic was Lord Lufton;—Ludovic Lufton, Baron Lufton of Lufton, in the county of Oxfordshire.

"And yet I don't think Lufton gets much astray," said Sir George, as he sauntered out of the room. "Well, Justy; we 'll put off going, then, till to-morrow; but remember, it must be the first train." Lady Meredith said she would remember, and then they went into the drawing-room, and there Mrs. Robarts received her letter. Fanny, when she read it, hardly at first realised to herself the idea that her husband, the clergyman of Framley, the family clerical friend of Lady Lufton's establishment, was going to stay with the Duke of Omnium. It was thoroughly understood at Framley Court that the duke and all belonging to him was noxious and damnable. He was a whig, he was a bachelor, he was a gambler, he was immoral in every way, he was a man of no church principle, a corrupter of youth, a sworn foe of young wives, a swallower up of small men's patrimonies; a man whom mothers feared for their sons, and sisters for their brothers; and worse again, whom fathers had cause to fear for their daughters, and brothers for their sisters;—a man who, with his belongings, dwelt, and must dwell, poles asunder from Lady Lufton and her belongings! And it must be remembered that all these evil things were fully believed by Mrs. Robarts. Could it really be that her husband was going to dwell in the halls of Apollyon, to shelter himself beneath the wings of this

very Lucifer? A cloud of sorrow settled upon her face, and then she read the letter again very slowly, not omitting the tell-tale postscript.

"Oh, Justinia!" at last she said.

"What, have you got bad news, too?"

"I hardly know how to tell you what has occurred. There; I suppose you had better read it;" and she handed her husband's epistle to Lady Meredith,—keeping back, however, the postscript.

"What on earth will her ladyship say now?" said Lady Meredith, as she folded the paper, and replaced it in the envelope.

"What had I better do, Justinia? How had I better tell her?" And then the two ladies put their heads together, bethinking themselves how they might best deprecate the wrath of Lady Lufton. It had been arranged that Mrs. Robarts should go back to the parsonage after lunch, and she had persisted in her intention after it had been settled that the Merediths were to stay over that evening. Lady Meredith now advised her friend to carry out this determination without saying anything about her husband's terrible iniquities, and then to send the letter up to Lady Lufton as soon as she reached the parsonage. "Mamma will never know that you received it here," said Lady Meredith. But Mrs. Robarts would not consent to this. Such a course seemed to her to be cowardly. She knew that her husband was doing wrong; she felt that he knew it himself; but still it was necessary that she should defend him. However terrible might be the storm, it must break upon her own head. So she at once went up and tapped at Lady Lufton's private door; and as she did so Lady Meredith followed her.

"Come in," said Lady Lufton, and the voice did not sound soft and pleasant. When they entered, they found her sitting at her little writing table, with her head resting on her arm, and that letter which she had received that morning was lying open on the table before her. Indeed there were two letters now there, one from a London lawyer to herself, and the other from her son to that London lawyer. It needs only be explained that the subject of those letters was the immediate sale of that outlying portion of the Lufton property in Oxfordshire, as to which Mr. Sowerby once spoke. Lord Lufton had told the lawyer that the thing must be done at once, adding that his friend Robarts would have explained the whole affair to his mother. And then the lawyer had written to Lady Lufton, as indeed was necessary; but unfortunately Lady Lufton had not hitherto heard a word of the matter. In her eyes the sale of family property was horrible; the fact that a young man with some fifteen or twenty thousand a year should require subsidiary money was horrible; that her own son should have not written to her himself was horrible; and it was also horrible that her own pet, the clergyman whom she had brought there to be her son's friend, should be mixed up in the matter; should be cognisant of it while she was not cognisant; should be employed in it as a go-between and agent in her son's bad courses. It was all horrible, and Lady Lufton was sitting there with a black brow and an uneasy heart. As regarded our poor parson, we may say that in this matter he was blameless, except that he had hitherto lacked the courage to execute his friend's commission.

"What is it, Fanny?" said Lady Lufton, as soon as

the door was opened; "I should have been down in half-an-hour, if you wanted me, Justinia."

"Fanny has received a letter which makes her wish to speak to you at once," said Lady Meredith.

"What letter, Fanny?" Poor Fanny's heart was in her mouth; she held it in her hand, but had not yet quite made up her mind whether she would show it bodily to Lady Lufton. "From Mr. Robarts," she said.

"Well; I suppose he is going to stay another week at Chaldicotes. For my part I should be as well pleased;" and Lady Lufton's voice was not friendly, for she was thinking of that farm in Oxfordshire. The imprudence of the young is very sore to the prudence of their elders. No woman could be less covetous, less grasping than Lady Lufton; but the sale of a portion of the old family property was to her as the loss of her own heart's blood.

"Here is the letter, Lady Lufton; perhaps you had better read it;" and Fanny handed it to her, again keeping back the postscript. She had read and re-read the letter downstairs, but could not make out whether her husband had intended her to show it. From the line of the argument she thought that he must have done so. At any rate he said for himself more than she could say for him, and so, probably, it was best that her ladyship should see it. Lady Lufton took it, and read it, and her face grew blacker and blacker. Her mind was set against the writer before she began it, and every word in it tended to make her feel more estranged from him. "Oh, he is going to the palace, is he? well; he must choose his own friends. Harold Smith one of his party! It 's a pity, my dear, he did not see Miss Proudie before he met you; he might

have lived to be the bishop's chaplain. Gatherum Castle! You don't mean to tell me that he is going there? Then I tell you fairly, Fanny, that I have done with him."

"Oh, Lady Lufton, don't say that," said Mrs. Robarts, with tears in her eyes.

"Mamma, mamma, don't speak in that way," said Lady Meredith.

"But, my dear, what am I to say? I must speak in that way. You would not wish me to speak falsehoods, would you? A man must choose for himself, but he can't live with two different sets of people;—at least, not if I belong to one and the Duke of Omnium to the other. The bishop going indeed! If there be anything that I hate it is hypocrisy."

"There is no hypocrisy in that, Lady Lufton."

"But I say there is, Fanny. Very strange, indeed! 'Put off his defence!' Why should a man need any defence to his wife if he acts in a straightforward way? His own language condemns him: 'Wrong to stand out!' Now, will either of you tell me that Mr. Robarts would really have thought it wrong to refuse that invitation? I say that that is hypocrisy. There is no other word for it." By this time the poor wife, who had been in tears, was wiping them away and preparing for action. Lady Lufton's extreme severity gave her courage. She knew that it behoved her to fight for her husband when he was thus attacked. Had Lady Lufton been moderate in her remarks Mrs. Robarts would not have had a word to say.

"My husband may have been ill-judged," she said, "but he is no hypocrite."

"Very well, my dear, I dare say you know better

than I; but to me it looks extremely like hypocrisy; eh, Justinia?"

"Oh, mamma, do be moderate."

"Moderate! That 's all very well. How is one to moderate one's feelings when one has been betrayed?"

"You do not mean that Mr. Robarts has betrayed you?" said the wife.

"Oh, no; of course not." And then she went on reading the letter: "'Seem to have been standing in judgment upon the duke.' Might he not use the same argument as to going into any house in the kingdom, however infamous? We must all stand in judgment one upon another in that sense. 'Crawley!' Yes; if he were a little more like Mr. Crawley it would be a good thing for me, and for the parish, and for you too, my dear. God forgive me for bringing him here; that 's all."

"Lady Lufton, I must say that you are very hard upon him,—very hard. I did not expect it from such a friend."

"My dear, you ought to know me well enough to be sure that I shall speak my mind. 'Written to Jones' —yes; it is easy enough to write to poor Jones. He had better write to Jones, and bid him do the whole duty. Then he can go and be the duke's domestic chaplain."

"I believe my husband does as much of his own duty as any clergyman in the whole diocese," said Mrs. Robarts, now again in tears.

"And you are to take his work in the school; you and Mrs. Podgens. What with his curate and his wife and Mrs. Podgens, I don't see why he should come back at all."

"Oh, mamma," said Justinia, "pray, pray don't be so harsh to her."

"Let me finish it, my dear;—oh, here I come. 'Tell her ladyship my whereabouts.' He little thought you 'd show me this letter."

"Did n't he?" said Mrs. Robarts, putting out her hand to get it back, but in vain. "I thought it was for the best; I did indeed."

"I had better finish it now, if you please. What is this? How does he dare send his ribald jokes to me in such a matter? No, I do not suppose I ever shall like Dr. Proudie; I have never expected it. A matter of conscience with him! Well;—well, well. Had I not read it myself, I could not have believed it of him. I would not positively have believed it. 'Coming from my parish he could not go to the Duke of Omnium!' And it is what I would wish to have said. People fit for this parish should not be fit for the Duke of Omnium's house. And I had trusted that he would have this feeling more strongly than any one else in it. I have been deceived,—that 's all."

"He has done nothing to deceive you, Lady Lufton."

"I hope he will not have deceived you, my dear. 'More money;' yes, it is probable that he will want more money. There is your letter, Fanny. I am very sorry for it. I can say nothing more." And she folded up the letter and gave it back to Mrs. Robarts.

"I thought it right to show it to you," said Mrs. Robarts.

"It did not much matter whether you did or no; of course I must have been told."

"He especially begs me to tell you."

"Why, yes; he could not very well have kept me

in the dark in such a matter. He could not neglect his own work, and go and live with gamblers and adulterers at the Duke of Omnium's without my knowing it." And now Fanny Robarts's cup was full, full to the overflowing. When she heard these words she forgot all about Lady Lufton, all about Lady Meredith, and remembered only her husband,—that he was her husband, and, in spite of his faults, a good and loving husband;—and that other fact also she remembered, that she was his wife.

"Lady Lufton," she said, "you forget yourself in speaking in that way of my husband."

"What!" said her ladyship; "you are to show me such a letter as that, and I am not to tell you what I think?"

"Not if you think such hard things as that. Even you are not justified in speaking to me in that way, and I will not bear it."

"Heighty-tighty!" said her ladyship.

"Whether or no he is right in going to the Duke of Omnium's, I will not pretend to judge. He is the judge of his own actions, and neither you nor I."

"And when he leaves you with the butcher's bill unpaid and no money to buy shoes for the children, who will be the judge then?"

"Not you, Lady Lufton. If such bad days should ever come,—and neither you nor I have a right to expect them,—I will not come to you in my troubles; not after this."

"Very well, my dear. You may go to the Duke of Omnium if that suits you better."

"Fanny, come away," said Lady Meredith. "Why should you try to anger my mother?"

"I don't want to anger her; but I won't hear him abused in that way without speaking up for him. If I don't defend him, who will? Lady Lufton has said terrible things about him; and they are not true."

"Oh, Fanny!" said Lady Meredith.

"Very well, very well!" said Lady Lufton. "This is the sort of return that one gets."

"I don't know what you mean by return, Lady Lufton; but would you wish me to stand by quietly and hear such things said of my husband? He does not live with such people as you have named. He does not neglect his duties. If every clergyman were as much in his parish, it would be well for some of them. And in going to such a house as the Duke of Omnium's it does make a difference that he goes there in company with the bishop. I can't explain why, but I know that it does."

"Especially when the bishop is coupled up with the devil, as Mr. Robarts has done," said Lady Lufton. "He can join the duke with them and then they 'll stand for the three Graces, won't they, Justinia?" And Lady Lufton laughed a bitter little laugh at her own wit.

"I suppose I may go now, Lady Lufton?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, my dear."

"I am sorry if I have made you angry with me; but I will not allow any one to speak against Mr. Robarts without answering them. You have been very unjust to him; and even though I do anger you, I must say so."

"Come, Fanny; this is too bad," said Lady Lufton. "You have been scolding me for the last half-hour because I would not congratulate you on this new friend

that your husband has made, and now you are going to begin it all over again. That is more than I can stand. If you have nothing else particular to say, you might as well leave me." And Lady Lufton's face as she spoke was unbending, severe, and harsh. Mrs. Robarts had never before been so spoken to by her old friend. Indeed, she had never been so spoken to by any one, and she hardly knew how to bear herself.

"Very well, Lady Lufton," she said; "then I will go. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Lady Lufton, and turning herself to her table she began to arrange her papers. Fanny had never before left Framley Court to go back to her own parsonage without a warm embrace. Now she was to do so without even having her hand taken. Had it come to this, that there was absolutely to be a quarrel between them—a quarrel for ever?

"Fanny is going, you know, mamma," said Lady Meredith. "She will be home before you are down again."

"I cannot help it, my dear. Fanny must do as she pleases. I am not to be the judge of her actions. She has just told me so." Mrs. Robarts had said nothing of the kind, but she was far too proud to point this out. So with a gentle step she retreated through the door, and then Lady Meredith, having tried what a conciliatory whisper with her mother would do, followed her. Alas, the conciliatory whisper was altogether ineffectual.

The two ladies said nothing as they descended the stairs, but when they had regained the drawing-room they looked with blank horror into each other's faces. What were they to do now? Of such a tragedy as

this they had had no remotest preconception. Was it absolutely the case that Fanny Robarts was to walk out of Lady Lufton's house as a declared enemy,—she who, before her marriage as well as since, had been almost treated as an adopted daughter of the family?

"Oh, Fanny, why did you answer my mother in that way?" said Lady Meredith. "You saw that she was vexed. She had other things to vex her besides this about Mr. Robarts."

"And would not you answer any one who attacked Sir George?"

"No, not my own mother. I would let her say what she pleased, and leave Sir George to fight his own battles."

"Ah, but it is different with you. You are her daughter, and Sir George;—— she would not dare to speak in that way as to Sir George's doings."

"Indeed she would, if it pleased her. I am sorry I let you go up to her."

"It is as well that it should be over, Justinia. As those are her thoughts about Mr. Robarts, it is quite as well that we should know them. Even for all that I owe to her, and all the love I bear to you, I will not come to this house if I am to hear my husband abused; —not into any house."

"My dearest Fanny, we all know what happens when two angry people get together."

"I was not angry when I went up to her; not in the least."

"It is no good looking back. What are we to do now, Fanny?"

"I suppose I had better go home," said Mrs. Rob-

arts. "I will go and put my things up, and then I will send James for them."

"Wait till after lunch, and then you will be able to kiss my mother before you leave us."

"No, Justinia; I cannot wait. I must answer Mr. Robarts by this post, and I must think what I have to say to him. I could not write that letter here, and the post goes at four." And Mrs. Robarts got up from her chair, preparatory to her final departure.

"I shall come to you before dinner," said Lady Meredith; "and if I can bring you good tidings, I shall expect you to come back here with me. It is out of the question that I should go away from Framley, leaving you and my mother at enmity with each other." To this Mrs. Robarts made no answer; and in a very few minutes afterwards she was in her own nursery, kissing her children, and teaching the elder one to say something about papa. But, even as she taught him, the tears stood in her eyes, and the little fellow knew that everything was not right. And there she sat till about two, doing little odds and ends of things for the children, and allowing that occupation to stand as an excuse to her for not commencing her letter. But then there remained only two hours to her, and it might be that the letter would be difficult in the writing,—would require thought and changes, and must needs be copied, perhaps, more than once. As to the money, that she had in the house,—as much, at least, as Mark now wanted, though the sending of it would leave her nearly penniless. She could, however, in case of personal need, resort to Davis as desired by him.

So she got out her desk in the drawing-room and sat down and wrote her letter. It was difficult, though she found that it hardly took so long as she expected. It was difficult, for she felt bound to tell him the truth; and yet she was anxious not to spoil all his pleasure among his friends. She told him, however, that Lady Lufton was very angry, "unreasonably angry, I must say," she put in, in order to show that she had not sided against him. "And, indeed, we have quite quarrelled, and this has made me unhappy, as it will you, dearest; I know that. But we both know how good she is at heart, and Justinia thinks that she had other things to trouble her; and I hope it will all be made up before you come home; only, dearest Mark, pray do not be longer than you said in your last letter." And then there were three or four paragraphs about the babies, and two about the schools, which I may as well omit. She had just finished her letter, and was carefully folding it for its envelope, with the two whole five-pound notes imprudently placed within it, when she heard a footstep on the gravel path which led up from a small wicket to the front door. The path ran near the drawing-room window, and she was just in time to catch a glimpse of the last fold of a passing cloak. "It is Justinia," she said to herself; and her heart became disturbed at the idea of again discussing the morning's adventure. "What am I to do," she had said to herself before, "if she wants me to beg her pardon? I will not own before her that he is in the wrong."

And then the door opened—for the visitor made her entrance without the aid of any servant,—and Lady

Lufton herself stood before her. "Fanny," she said at once, "I have come to beg your pardon."

"Oh, Lady Lufton!"

"I was very much harassed when you came to me just now;—by more things than one, my dear. But, nevertheless, I should not have spoken to you of your husband as I did, and so I have come to beg your pardon." Mrs. Robarts was past answering by the time that this was said, past answering at least in words; so she jumped up, and with her eyes full of tears, threw herself into her old friend's arms. "Oh, Lady Lufton!" she sobbed forth again.

"You will forgive me, won't you?" said her ladyship, as she returned her young friend's caress. "Well, that 's right. I have not been at all happy since you left my den this morning, and I don't suppose you have. But, Fanny, dearest, we love each other too well, and know each other too thoroughly, to have a long quarrel, don't we?"

"Oh, yes, Lady Lufton."

"Of course we do. Friends are not to be picked up on the roadside every day; nor are they to be thrown away lightly. And now sit down, my love, and let us have a little talk. There, I must take my bonnet off. You have pulled the strings so that you have almost choked me." And Lady Lufton deposited her bonnet on the table, and seated herself comfortably in the corner of the sofa.

"My dear," she said, "there is no duty which any woman owes to any other human being at all equal to that which she owes to her husband, and therefore you were quite right to stand up for Mr. Robarts this morning." Upon this Mrs. Robarts said nothing, but

she got her hand within that of her ladyship and gave it a slight squeeze.

"And I loved you for what you were doing all the time. I did, my dear; though you were a little fierce, you know. Even Justinia admits that, and she has been at me ever since you went away. And, indeed, I did not know that it was in you to look in that way out of those pretty eyes of yours."

"Oh, Lady Lufton!"

"But I looked fierce enough too myself, I dare say; so we 'll say nothing more about that; will we? But now, about this good man of yours?"

"Dear Lady Lufton, you must forgive him."

"Well, as you ask me, I will. We 'll have nothing more said about the duke, either now or when he comes back; not a word. Let me see,—he 's to be back;—when is it?'

"Wednesday week, I think."

"Ah, Wednesday. Well, tell him to come and dine up at the house on Wednesday. He 'll be in time, I suppose, and there shan't be a word said about this horrid duke."

"I am so much obliged to you, Lady Lufton."

"But look here, my dear; believe me, he 's better off without such friends."

"Oh, I know he is; much better off."

"Well, I 'm glad you admit that, for I thought you seemed to be in favour of the duke."

"Oh, no, Lady Lufton."

"That 's right, then. And now, if you 'll take my advice, you 'll use your influence, as a good, dear, sweet wife as you are, to prevent his going there any more. I 'm an old woman and he is a young man, and it 's

very natural that he should think me behind the times. I 'm not angry at that. But he 'll find that it 's better for him, better for him in every way, to stick to his old friends. It will be better for his peace of mind, better for his character as a clergyman, better for his pocket, better for his children and for you,—and better for his eternal welfare. The duke is not such a companion as he should seek;—nor if he is sought, should he allow himself to be led away." And then Lady Lufton ceased, and Fanny Robarts kneeling at her feet sobbed, with her face hidden on her friend's knees. She had not a word now to say as to her husband's capability of judging for himself.

"And now I must be going again; but Justinia has made me promise,—promise, mind you, most solemnly, that I would have you back to dinner to-night,—by force if necessary. It was the only way I could make my peace with her; so you must not leave me in the lurch." Of course, Fanny said that she would go and dine at Framley Court.

"And you must not send that letter, by any means," said her ladyship as she was leaving the room, poking with her umbrella at the epistle, which lay directed on Mrs. Robarts's desk. "I can understand very well what it contains. You must alter it altogether, my dear." And then Lady Lufton went.

Mrs. Robarts instantly rushed to her desk and tore open her letter. She looked at her watch and it was past four. She had hardly begun another when the postman came. "Oh, Mary," she said, "do make him wait. If he 'll wait a quarter of an hour I 'll give him a shilling."

"There 's no need of that, ma'am. Let him have a glass of beer."

"Very well, Mary; but don't give him too much, for fear he should drop the letters about. I 'll be ready in ten minutes." And in five minutes she had scrawled a very different sort of a letter. But he might want the money immediately, so she would not delay it for a day.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. HAROLD SMITH'S LECTURE.

On the whole the party at Chaldicotes was very pleasant, and the time passed away quickly enough. Mr. Robarts's chief friend there, independently of Mr. Sowerby, was Miss Dunstable, who seemed to take a great fancy to him, whereas she was not very accessible to the blandishments of Mr. Supplehouse, nor more specially courteous even to her host than good manners required of her. But then Mr. Supplehouse and Mr. Sowerby were both bachelors, while Mark Robarts was a married man. With Mr. Sowerby Robarts had more than one communication respecting Lord Lufton and his affairs, which he would willingly have avoided had it been possible. Sowerby was one of those men who are always mixing up business with pleasure, and who have usually some scheme in their mind which requires forwarding. Men of this class have, as a rule, no daily work, no regular routine of labour; but it may be doubted whether they do not toil much more incessantly than those who have.

"Lufton is so dilatory," Mr. Sowerby said. "Why did he not arrange this at once, when he promised it? And then he is so afraid of that old woman at Framley Court. Well, my dear fellow, say what you will; she is an old woman, and she 'll never be younger.

But do write to Lufton, and tell him that this delay is inconvenient to me. He 'll do anything for you, I know." Mark said that he would write, and, indeed, did do so; but he did not at first like the tone of the conversation into which he was dragged. It was very painful to him to hear Lady Lufton called an old woman, and hardly less so to discuss the propriety of Lord Lufton's parting with his property. This was irksome to him, till habit made it easy. But by degrees his feelings became less acute, and he accustomed himself to his friend Sowerby's mode of talking.

And then on Saturday afternoon they all went over to Barchester. Harold Smith during the last forty-eight hours had become crammed to overflowing with Sarawak, Labuan, New Guinea, and the Salomon Islands. As is the case with all men labouring under temporary specialties, he for the time had faith in nothing else, and was not content that any one near him should have any other faith. They called him Viscount Papua and Baron Borneo; and his wife, who headed the joke against him, insisted on having her title. Miss Dunstable swore that she would wed none but a South Sea islander; and to Mark was offered the income and duties of Bishop of Spices. Nor did the Proudie family set themselves against these little sarcastic quips with any overwhelming severity. It is sweet to unbend oneself at the proper opportunity, and this was the proper opportunity for Mrs. Proudie's unbending. No mortal can be seriously wise at all hours; and in these happy hours did that usually wise mortal, the bishop, lay aside for a while his serious wisdom.

"We think of dining at five to-morrow, my Lady Papua," said the facetious bishop; "will that suit his

lordship and the affairs of State? he! he! he!" And the good prelate laughed at the fun. How pleasantly young men and women of fifty or thereabouts can joke and flirt and poke their fun about, laughing and holding their sides, dealing in little innuendoes and rejoicing in nicknames, when they have no Mentors of twenty-five or thirty near them to keep them in order! The vicar of Framley might perhaps have been regarded as such a Mentor, were it not for that capability of adapting himself to the company immediately around him on which he so much piqued himself. He therefore also talked to my Lady Papua, and was jocose about the Baron,—not altogether to the satisfaction of Mr. Harold Smith himself. For Mr. Harold Smith was in earnest, and did not quite relish these jocundities. He had an idea that he could in about three months talk the British world into civilising New Guinea, and that the world of Barsetshire would be made to go with him by one night's efforts. He did not understand why others should be less serious, and was inclined to resent somewhat stiffly the amenities of our friend Mark.

"We must not keep the Baron waiting," said Mark, as they were preparing to start for Barchester.

"I don't know what you mean by the Baron, sir," said Harold Smith. "But perhaps the joke will be against you, when you are getting up into your pulpit to-morrow, and sending the hat round among the clod-hoppers of Chaldicotes."

"Those who live in glass houses should n't throw stones; eh, Baron?" said Miss Dunstable. "Mr. Robarts's sermon will be too near akin to your lecture to allow of his laughing."

"If we can do nothing towards instructing the outer world till it 's done by the parsons," said Harold Smith, "the outer world will have to wait a long time, I fear."

"Nobody can do anything of that kind short of a member of Parliament and a would-be minister," whispered Mrs. Harold. And so they were all very pleasant together, in spite of a little fencing with edge-tools; and at three o'clock the cortége of carriages started for Barchester, that of the bishop, of course, leading the way. His lordship, however, was not in it.

"Mrs. Proudie, I 'm sure you 'll let me go with you," said Miss Dunstable, at the last moment, as she came down the big stone steps. "I want to hear the rest of that story about Mr. Slope." Now this upset everything. The bishop was to have gone with his wife, Mrs. Smith, and Mark Robarts; and Mr. Sowerby had so arranged matters that he could have accompanied Miss Dunstable in his phaeton. But no one ever dreamed of denying Miss Dunstable anything. Of course Mark gave way; but it ended in the bishop declaring that he had no special predilection for his own carriage, which he did in compliance with a glance from his wife's eye. Then other changes of course followed, and, at last, Mr. Sowerby and Harold Smith were the joint occupants of the phaeton. The poor lecturer, as he seated himself, made some remark such as those he had been making for the last two days,—for out of a full heart the mouth speaketh. But he spoke to an impatient listener. "D—— the South Sea islanders," said Mr. Sowerby. "You 'll have it all your own way in a few minutes, like a bull in a china-shop; but for Heaven's sake let us have a little peace

till that time comes." It appeared that Mr. Sowerby's little plan of having Miss Dunstable for his companion was not quite insignificant; and, indeed, it may be said that but few of his little plans were so. At the present moment he flung himself back in the carriage and prepared for sleep. He could further no plan of his by a tête à tête conversation with his brother-in-law. And then Mrs. Proudie began her story about Mr. Slope, or rather recommenced it. She was very fond of talking about this gentleman, who had once been her pet chaplain, but was now her bitterest foe; and in telling the story, she had sometimes to whisper to Miss Dunstable, for there were one or two fie-fie little anecdotes about a married lady, not altogether fit for young Mr. Robarts's ears. But Mrs. Harold Smith insisted on having them out loud, and Miss Dunstable would gratify that lady in spite of Mrs. Proudie's winks.

"What, kissing her hand, and he a clergyman!" said Miss Dunstable. "I did not think they ever did such things, Mr. Robarts."

"Still waters run deepest," said Mrs. Harold Smith.

"Hush-h-h," looked, rather than spoke, Mrs. Proudie. "The grief of spirit which that bad man caused me nearly broke my heart, and all the while, you know, he was courting—" and then Mrs. Proudie whispered a name.

"What, the dean's wife!" shouted Miss Dunstable, in a voice which made the coachman of the next carriage give a chuck to his horses as he overheard her.

"The archdeacon's sister-in-law!" screamed Mrs. Harold Smith.

"What might he not have attempted next?" said Miss Dunstable.

"She was n't the dean's wife then, you know," said Mrs. Proudie, explaining.

"Well, you 've a gay set in the chapter, I must say," said Miss Dunstable. "You ought to make one of them in Barchester, Mr. Robarts."

"Only perhaps Mrs. Robarts might not like it," said Mrs. Harold Smith.

"And then the schemes which he tried on with the bishop!" said Mrs. Proudie.

"It 's all fair in love and war, you know," said Miss Dunstable.

"But he little knew whom he had to deal with when he began that," said Mrs. Proudie.

"The bishop was too many for him," suggested Mrs. Harold Smith, very maliciously.

"If the bishop was not, somebody else was; and he was obliged to leave Barchester in utter disgrace. He has since married the wife of some tallow-chandler."

"The wife!" said Miss Dunstable. "What a man!"

"Widow, I mean; but it 's all one to him."

"The gentleman was clearly born when Venus was in the ascendant," said Mrs. Smith. "You clergymen usually are, I believe, Mr. Robarts." So that Mrs. Proudie's carriage was by no means the dullest as they drove into Barchester that day; and by degrees our friend Mark became accustomed to his companions, and before they reached the palace he acknowledged to himself that Miss Dunstable was very good fun. We cannot linger over the bishop's dinner, though it was very good of its kind; and as Mr. Sowerby contrived to sit next to Miss Dunstable, thereby overturning a little scheme made by Mr. Supplehouse, he again shone forth in unclouded good-humour. But Mr.

Harold Smith became impatient immediately on the withdrawal of the cloth. The lecture was to begin at seven, and according to his watch that hour had already come. He declared that Sowerby and Supplehouse were endeavouring to delay matters in order that the Barchesterians might become vexed and impatient; and so the bishop was not allowed to exercise his hospitality in true episcopal fashion.

"You forget, Sowerby," said Supplehouse, "that the world here for the last fortnight has been looking forward to nothing else."

"The world shall be gratified at once," said Mrs. Harold, obeying a little nod from Mrs. Proudie. "Come, my dear," and she took hold of Miss Dunstable's arm, "don't let us keep Barchester waiting. We shall be ready in a quarter-of-an-hour, shall we not, Mrs. Proudie?" and so they sailed off.

"And we shall have time for one glass of claret," said the bishop.

"There; that 's seven by the cathedral," said Harold Smith, jumping up from his chair as he heard the clock. "If the people have come it would not be right in me to keep them waiting, and I shall go."

"Just one glass of claret, Mr. Smith, and we 'll be off," said the bishop.

"Those women will keep me an hour," said Harold, filling his glass, and drinking it standing. "They do it on purpose." He was thinking of his wife, but it seemed to the bishop as though his guest were actually speaking of Mrs. Proudie.

It was rather late when they all found themselves in the big room of the Mechanics' Institute; but I do not know whether this on the whole did them any

harm. Most of Mr. Smith's hearers, excepting the party from the palace, were Barchester tradesmen with their wives and families; and they waited, not impatiently, for the big people. And then the lecture was gratis, a fact which is always borne in mind by an Englishman when he comes to reckon up and calculate the way in which he is treated. When he pays his money, then he takes his choice; he may be impatient or not as he likes. His sense of justice teaches him so much, and in accordance with that sense he usually acts. So the people on the benches rose graciously when the palace party entered the room. Seats for them had been kept in the front. There were three arm-chairs, which were filled, after some little hesitation, by the bishop, Mrs. Proudie, and Miss Dunstable;—Mrs. Smith positively declining to take one of them, though, as she admitted, her rank as Lady Papua of the islands did give her some claim. And this remark, as it was made quite out loud, reached Mr. Smith's ears as he stood behind a little table on a small raised dais, holding his white kid gloves; and it annoyed him and rather put him out. He did not like that joke about Lady Papua. And then the others of the party sat upon a front bench covered with red cloth. "We shall find this very hard and very narrow about the second hour," said Mr. Sowerby, and Mr. Smith on his dais again overheard the words, and dashed his gloves down to the table. He felt that all the room would hear it.

And there were one or two gentlemen on the second seat who shook hands with some of our party. There was Mr. Thorne, of Ullathorne, a good-natured old bachelor, whose residence was near enough to Bar-

chester to allow of his coming in without much personal inconvenience; and next to him was Mr. Harding, an old clergyman of the chapter, with whom Mrs. Proudie shook hands very graciously, making way for him to seat himself close behind her if he would so please. But Mr. Harding did not so please. Having paid his respects to the bishop he returned quietly to the side of his old friend Mr. Thorne, thereby angering Mrs. Proudie, as might easily be seen by her face. And Mr. Chadwick also was there, the episcopal man of business for the diocese; but he also adhered to the two gentlemen above named. And now that the bishop and the ladies had taken their places, Mr. Harold Smith relifted his gloves and again laid them down, hummed three times distinctly, and then began.

"It was," he said, "the most peculiar characteristic of the present era in the British islands that those who were high placed before the world in rank, wealth, and education were willing to come forward and give their time and knowledge without fee or reward, for the advantage and amelioration of those who did not stand so high in the social scale." And then he paused for a moment, during which Mrs. Smith remarked to Miss Dunstable that that was pretty well for a beginning; and Miss Dunstable replied, "that as for herself she felt very grateful to rank, wealth, and education." Mr. Sowerby winked to Mr. Supplehouse, who opened his eyes very wide and shrugged his shoulders. But the Barchesterians took it all in good part, and gave the lecturer the applause of their hands and feet. And then, well pleased, he re-commenced—"I do not make these remarks with reference to myself——"

"I hope he 's not going to be modest," said Miss Dunstable.

"It will be quite new if he is," replied Mrs. Smith.

"——so much as to many noble and talented lords and members of the Lower House who have lately from time to time devoted themselves to this good work." And then he went through a long list of peers and members of Parliament, beginning, of course, with Lord Boanerges, and ending with Mr. Green Walker, a young gentleman who had lately been returned by his uncle's interest for the borough of Crewe Junction, and had immediately made his entrance into public life by giving a lecture on the grammarians of the Latin language as exemplified at Eton school. "On the present occasion," Mr. Smith continued, "our object is to learn something as to those grand and magnificent islands which lie far away, beyond the Indies, in the Southern Ocean; the lands of which produce rich spices and glorious fruits, and whose seas are embedded with pearls and corals,—Papua and the Philippines, Borneo and the Moluccas. My friends, you are familiar with your maps, and you know the track which the equator makes for itself through those distant oceans." And then many heads were turned down, and there was a rustle of leaves; for not a few of those "who stood not so high in the social scale" had brought their maps with them, and refreshed their memories as to the whereabouts of these wondrous islands.

And then Mr. Smith also, with a map in his hand, and pointing occasionally to another large map which hung against the wall, went into the geography of the matter. "We might have found that out from our atlases, I think, without coming all the way to Bar-

chester," said that unsympathising helpmate, Mrs. Harold, very cruelly,—most illogically too, for there be so many things which we could find out ourselves by search, but which we never do find out unless they be specially told us; and why should not the latitude and longitude of Labuan be one,—or rather two of these things? And then, when he had duly marked the path of the line through Borneo, Celebes, and Giolo, through the Macassar strait and the Molucca passage, Mr. Harold Smith rose to a higher flight. "But what," said he, "avails all that God can give to man, unless man will open his hand to receive the gift? And what is this opening of the hand but the process of civilisation—yes, my friends, the process of civilisation? These South Sea islanders have all that a kind Providence can bestow on them; but that all is as nothing without education. That education and that civilisation it is for you to bestow upon them—yes, my friends, for you; for you, citizens of Barchester as you are." And then he paused again, in order that the feet and hands might go to work. The feet and hands did go to work, during which Mr. Smith took a slight drink of water. He was now quite in his element, and had got into the proper way of punching the table with his fists. A few words dropping from Mr. Sowerby did now and again find their way to his ears, but the sound of his own voice had brought with it the accustomed charm, and he ran on from platitude to truism, and from truism back to platitude, with an eloquence that was charming to himself.

"Civilisation," he exclaimed, lifting up his eyes and hands to the ceiling. "O Civilisation——"

"There will not be a chance for us now for the next

hour and a half," said Mr. Supplehouse, groaning. Harold Smith cast one eye down at him, but it immediately flew back to the ceiling.

"O Civilisation! thou that ennoblest mankind and makest him equal to the gods, what is like unto thee?"

Here Mrs. Proudie showed evident signs of disapprobation, which no doubt would have been shared by the bishop, had not that worthy prelate been asleep. But Mr. Smith continued unobservant; or at any rate regardless. "What is like unto thee? Thou art the irrigating stream which makest fertile the barren plain. Till thou comest all is dark and dreary; but at thy advent the noontide sun shines out, the earth gives forth her increase; the deep bowels of the rocks render up their tribute. Forms which were dull and hideous become endowed with grace and beauty, and vegetable existence rises to the scale of celestial life. Then, too, Genius appears clad in a panoply of translucent armour, grasping in his hand the whole terrestrial surface, and making every rood of earth subservient to his purposes;—Genius, the child of Civilisation, the mother of the Arts!" The last little bit, taken from the Pedigree of Progress, had a great success, and all Barchester went to work with its hands and feet;—all Barchester, except that ill-natured aristocratic front-row together with the three arm-chairs at the corner of it. The aristocratic front-row felt itself to be too intimate with civilisation to care much about it; and the three arm-chairs, or rather that special one which contained Mrs. Proudie, considered that there was a certain heathenness, a pagan sentimentality almost amounting to infidelity, contained in the lecturer's remarks, with which she, a pillar of the church, could

not put up, seated as she was now in public conclave.

"It is to civilisation that we must look," continued Mr. Harold Smith, descending from poetry to prose as a lecturer well knows how, and thereby showing the value of both—"for any material progress in these islands; and——"

"And to Christianity," shouted Mrs. Proudie, to the great amazement of the assembled people, and to the thorough wakening of the bishop, who, jumping up in his chair at the sound of the well-known voice, exclaimed, "Certainly, certainly."

"Hear, hear, hear," said those on the benches who particularly belonged to Mrs. Proudie's school of divinity in the city, and among the voices was distinctly heard that of a new verger in whose behalf she had greatly interested herself.

"Oh, yes, Christianity of course," said Harold Smith, upon whom the interruption did not seem to operate favourably.

"Christianity and Sabbath-day observance," exclaimed Mrs. Proudie, who, now that she had obtained the ear of the public, seemed well inclined to keep it. "Let us never forget that these islanders can never prosper unless they keep the Sabbath holy." Poor Mr. Smith, having been so rudely dragged from his high horse, was never able to mount it again, and completed the lecture in a manner not at all comfortable to himself. He had there, on the table before him, a huge bundle of statistics, with which he had meant to convince the reason of his hearers, after he had taken full possession of their feelings. But they fell very dull and flat. And at the moment when he

was interrupted, he was about to explain that that material progress to which he had alluded could not be attained without money; and that it behoved them, the people of Barchester before him, to come forward with their purses like men and brothers. He did also attempt this; but from the moment of that fatal onslaught from the arm-chair, it was clear to him, and to every one else, that Mrs. Proudie was now the hero of the hour. His time had gone by, and the people of Barchester did not care a straw for his appeal. From these causes the lecture was over full twenty minutes earlier than any one had expected, to the great delight of Messrs. Sowerby and Supplehouse, who, on that evening, moved and carried a vote of thanks to Mrs. Proudie. For they had gay doings yet before they went to their beds.

"Robarts, here one moment," Mr. Sowerby said, as they were standing at the door of the Mechanics' Institute. "Don't you go off with Mr. and Mrs. Bishop. We are going to have a little supper at the Dragon of Wantly, and, after what we have gone through, upon my word we want it. You can tell one of the palace servants to let you in." Mark considered the proposal wistfully. He would fain have joined the supper party had he dared; but he, like many others of his cloth, had the fear of Mrs. Proudie before his eyes. A very merry supper they had; but poor Mr. Harold Smith was not the merriest of the party.

CHAPTER VII.

SUNDAY MORNING.

It was, perhaps, quite as well, on the whole, for Mark Robarts that he did not go to that supper party. It was eleven o'clock before they sat down, and nearly two before the gentlemen were in bed. It must be remembered that he had to preach on the coming Sunday morning a charity sermon on behalf of a mission tc Mr. Harold Smith's islanders; and to tell the truth, it was a task for which he had now very little inclination. When first invited to do this, he had regarded the task seriously enough, as he always did regard such work, and he completed his sermon for the occasion before he left Framley; but since that an air of ridicule had been thrown over the whole affair, in which he had joined without much thinking of his own sermon, and this made him now heartily wish that he could choose a discourse upon any other subject. He knew well that the very points on which he had most insisted were those which had drawn most mirth from Miss Dunstable and Mrs. Smith, and had oftenest provoked his own laughter; and how was he now to preach on those matters in a fitting mood, knowing, as he would know, that those two ladies would be looking at him, would endeavour to catch his eye, and would turn him into ridicule as they had already turned the

lecturer? In this he did injustice to one of the ladies unconsciously. Miss Dunstable, with all her aptitude for mirth, and we may almost fairly say for frolic, was in no way inclined to ridicule religion, or anything which she thought to appertain to it. It may be presumed that among such things she did not include Mrs. Proudie, as she was willing enough to laugh at that lady; but Mark, had he known her better, might have been sure that she would sit out his sermon with perfect propriety.

As it was, however, he did feel considerable uneasiness; and in the morning he got up early, with the view of seeing what might be done in the way of emendation. He cut out those parts which referred most specially to the islands,—he rejected altogether those names over which they had all laughed together so heartily,—and he inserted a string of general remarks, very useful, no doubt, which he flattered himself would rob his sermon of all similarity to Harold Smith's lecture. He had, perhaps, hoped, when writing it, to create some little sensation; but now he would be quite satisfied if it passed without remark. But his troubles for that Sunday were destined to be many. It had been arranged that the party at the hotel should breakfast at eight and start at half-past eight punctually, so as to enable them to reach Chaldicotes in ample time to arrange their dresses before they went to church. The church stood in the grounds, close to that long formal avenue of lime-trees, but within the front gates. Their walk, therefore, after reaching Mr. Sowerby's house, would not be long.

Mrs. Proudie, who was herself an early body, would not hear of her guest,—and he a clergyman,—going

out to the inn for his breakfast on a Sunday morning. As regarded that Sabbath-day journey to Chaldicotes, to that she had given her assent, no doubt with much uneasiness of mind; but let them have as little desecration as possible. It was therefore an understood thing that he was to return with his friends; but he should not go without the advantage of family prayers and family breakfast. And so Mrs. Proudie on retiring to rest gave the necessary orders, to the great annoyance of her household.

To the great annoyance, at least, of her servants! The bishop himself did not make his appearance till a much later hour. He in all things now supported his wife's rule; in all things, now, I say; for there had been a moment, when in the first flush and pride of his episcopacy, other ideas had filled his mind. Now, however, he gave no opposition to that good woman with whom Providence had blessed him; and in return for such conduct that good woman administered in all things to his little personal comforts. With what surprise did the bishop now look back upon that unholy war which he had once been tempted to wage against the wife of his bosom! Nor did any of the Miss Proudies show themselves at that early hour. They, perhaps, were absent on a different ground. With them Mrs. Proudie had not been so successful as with the bishop. They had wills of their own which became stronger and stronger every day. Of the three with whom Mrs. Proudie was blessed one was already in a position to exercise that will in a legitimate way over a very excellent young clergyman in the diocese, the Rev. Optimus Grey; but the other two, having as yet no such opening for their powers of command,

were perhaps a little too much inclined to keep themselves in practice at home. But at half-past seven punctually Mrs. Proudie was there, and so was the domestic chaplain; so was Mr. Robarts, and so were the household servants,—all excepting one lazy recreant. "Where is Thomas?" said she of the Argus eyes, standing up with her book of family prayers in her hand. "So please you, ma'am, Tummas be bad with the tooth-ache." "Tooth-ache!" exclaimed Mrs. Proudie; but her eyes said more terrible things than that. "Let Thomas come to me before church." And then they proceeded to prayers. These were read by the chaplain, as it was proper and decent that they should be; but I cannot but think that Mrs. Proudie a little exceeded her office in taking upon herself to pronounce the blessing when the prayers were over. She did it, however, in a clear, sonorous voice, and perhaps with more personal dignity than was within the chaplain's compass.

Mrs. Proudie was rather stern at breakfast, and the vicar of Framley felt an unaccountable desire to get out of the house. In the first place, she was not dressed with her usual punctilious attention to the proprieties of her high situation. It was evident that there was to be a further toilet before she sailed up the middle of the cathedral choir. She had on a large loose cap with no other strings than those which were wanted for tying it beneath her chin, a cap with which the household and the chaplain were well acquainted, but which seemed ungracious in the eyes of Mr. Robarts after all the well-dressed holiday doings of the last week. She wore also a large, loose, dark-coloured wrapper, which came well up round her neck, and

which was not buoyed out, as were her dresses in general, with an under mechanism of petticoats. It clung to her closely, and added to the inflexibility of her general appearance. And then she had encased her feet in large carpet slippers, which no doubt were comfortable, but which struck her visitor as being strange and unsightly. "Do you find a difficulty in getting your people together for early morning prayers?" she said, as she commenced her operations with the teapot.

"I can't say that I do," said Mark. "But then we are seldom so early as this."

"Parish clergymen should be early, I think," said she. "It sets a good example in the village."

"I am thinking of having morning prayers in the church," said Mr. Robarts.

"That 's nonsense," said Mrs. Proudie, "and usually means worse than nonsense. I know what that comes to. If you have three services on Sunday and domestic prayers at home, you do very well." And so saying she handed him his cup.

"But I have not three services on Sunday, Mrs. Proudie."

"Then I think you should have. Where can the poor people be so well off on Sundays as in church? The bishop intends to express a very strong opinion on this subject in his next charge; and then I am sure you will attend to his wishes." To this Mark made no answer, but devoted himself to his egg.

"I suppose you have not a very large establishment at Framley?" asked Mrs. Proudie.

"What, at the parsonage?"

"Yes; you live at the parsonage, don't you?"

"Certainly. Well; not very large, Mrs. Proudie;

just enough to do the work, make things comfortable, and look after the children."

"It is a very fine living," said she; "very fine. I don't remember that we have anything so good ourselves,—except it is Plumstead, the archdeacon's place. He has managed to butter his bread pretty well."

"His father was bishop of Barchester."

"Oh, yes, I know all about him. Only for that he would barely have risen to be an archdeacon, I suspect. Let me see; yours is 800*l.*, is it not, Mr. Robarts? And you such a young man! I suppose you have insured your life highly."

"Pretty well, Mrs. Proudie."

"And then, too, your wife had some little fortune, had she not? We cannot all fall on our feet like that; can we, Mr. White?" and Mrs. Proudie in her playful way appealed to the chaplain. Mrs. Proudie was an imperious woman; but then so also was Lady Lufton; and it may therefore be said that Mr. Robarts ought to have been accustomed to feminine domination; but as he sat there munching his toast he could not but make a comparison between the two. Lady Lufton in her little attempts sometimes angered him; but he certainly thought, comparing the lay lady and the clerical together, that the rule of the former was the lighter and the pleasanter. But then Lady Lufton had given him a living and a wife, and Mrs. Proudie had given him nothing. Immediately after breakfast Mr. Robarts escaped to the Dragon of Wantly, partly because he had had enough of the matutinal Mrs. Proudie, and partly also in order that he might hurry his friends there. He was already becoming fidgety about the time, as Harold Smith had been on the preceding

evening, and he did not give Mrs. Smith credit for much punctuality. When he arrived at the inn he asked if they had done breakfast, and was immediately told that not one of them was yet down. It was already half-past eight, and they ought to be now under way on the road. He immediately went to Mr. Sowerby's room, and found that gentleman shaving himself. "Don't be a bit uneasy," said Mr. Sowerby. "You and Smith shall have my phaeton, and those horses will take you there in an hour. Not, however, but what we shall all be in time. We 'll send round to the whole party and ferret them out." And then Mr. Sowerby, having evoked manifold aid with various peals of the bell, sent messengers, male and female, flying to all the different rooms.

"I think I 'll hire a gig and go over at once," said Mark. "It would not do for me to be late, you know."

"It won't do for any of us to be late; and it 's all nonsense about hiring a gig. It would be just throwing a sovereign away, and we should pass you on the road. Go down and see that the tea is made, and all that; and make them have the bill ready; and, Robarts, you may pay it too, if you like it. But I believe we may as well leave that to Baron Borneo—eh?" And the Mark did go down and make the tea, and he did order the bill; and then he walked about the room, looking at his watch, and nervously waiting for the footsteps of his friends. And as he was so employed, he bethought himself whether it was fit that he should be so doing on a Sunday morning; whether it was good that he should be waiting there, in painful anxiety, to gallop over a dozen miles in order that he

might not be too late with his sermon; whether his own snug room at home, with Fanny opposite to him, and his bairns crawling on the floor, with his own preparations for his own quiet service, and the warm pressure of Lady Lufton's hand when that service should be over, was not better than all this. He could not afford not to know Harold Smith, and Mr. Sowerby, and the Duke of Omnium, he had said to himself. He had to look to rise in the world, as other men did. But what pleasure had come to him as yet from these intimacies? How much had he hitherto done towards his rising? To speak the truth he was not over well pleased with himself, as he made Mrs. Harold Smith's tea and ordered Mr. Sowerby's mutton-chops on that Sunday morning.

At a little after nine they all assembled; but even then he could not make the ladies understand that there was any cause for hurry; at least Mrs. Smith, who was the leader of the party, would not understand it. When Mark again talked of hiring a gig, Miss Dunstable indeed said that she would join him; and seemed to be so far earnest in the matter that Mr. Sowerby hurried through his second egg in order to prevent such a catastrophe. And then Mark absolutely did order the gig; whereupon Mrs. Smith remarked that in such case she need not hurry herself; but the waiter brought up word that all the horses of the hotel were out, excepting one pair, neither of which could go in single harness. Indeed, half of their stable establishment was already secured by Mr. Sowerby's own party. "Then let me have the pair," said Mark, almost frantic with delay.

"Nonsense, Robarts; we are ready now. He

won't want them, James. Come, Supplehouse, have you done?"

"Then I am to hurry myself, am I?" said Mrs. Harold Smith. "What changeable creatures you men are! May I be allowed half a cup more tea, Mr. Robarts?" Mark, who was now really angry, turned away to the window. There was no charity in these people, he said to himself. They knew the nature of his distress, and yet they only laughed at him. He did not, perhaps, reflect that he had assisted in the joke against Harold Smith on the previous evening. "James," said he, turning to the waiter, "let me have that pair of horses immediately, if you please."

"Yes, sir; round in fifteen minutes, sir; only Ned, sir, the postboy, sir; I fear he 's at his breakfast, sir; but we 'll have him here in less than no time, sir!" But before Ned and the pair were there, Mrs. Smith had absolutely got her bonnet on, and at ten they started. Mark did share the phaeton with Harold Smith, but the phaeton did not go any faster than the other carriages. They led the way, indeed, but that was all; and when the vicar's watch told him that it was eleven, they were still a mile from Chaldicotes gate, although the horses were in a lather of steam; and they had only just entered the village when the church bells ceased to be heard.

"Come, you are in time, after all," said Harold Smith. "Better time than I was last night." Robarts could not explain to him that the entry of a clergyman into church, of a clergyman who is going to assist in the service, should not be made at the last minute, that it should be staid and decorous, and not done in scrambling haste, with running feet and scant breath.

"I suppose we 'll stop here, sir," said the postilion, as he pulled up his horses short at the church-door, in the midst of the people who were congregated together ready for the service. But Mark had not anticipated being so late, and said at first that it was necessary that he should go on to the house; then, when the horses had again begun to move, he remembered that he could send for his gown, and as he got out of the carriage he gave his orders accordingly. And now the other two carriages were there, and so there was a noise and confusion at the door—very unseemly, as Mark felt it; and the gentlemen spoke in loud voices, and Mrs. Harold Smith declared that she had no prayer-book, and was much too tired to go in at present; she would go home and rest herself, she said. And two other ladies of the party did so also, leaving Miss Dunstable to go alone;—for which, however, she did not care one button. And then one of the party, who had a nasty habit of swearing, cursed at something as he walked in close to Mark's elbow; and so they made their way up the church as the absolution was being read; and Mark Robarts felt thoroughly ashamed of himself. If his rising in the world brought him in contact with such things as these, would it not be better for him that he should do without rising? His sermon went off without any special notice. Mrs. Harold Smith was not there, much to his satisfaction; and the others who were did not seem to pay any special attention to it. The subject had lost its novelty, except with the ordinary church congregation, the farmers and labourers of the parish; and the "quality" in the squire's great pew were content to show their sympathy by a moderate subscription. Miss Dunstable, how-

ever, gave a ten-pound note, which swelled up the sum total to a respectable amount—for such a place as Chaldicotes.

"And now I hope I may never hear another word about New Guinea," said Mr. Sowerby, as they all clustered round the drawing-room fire after church. "That subject may be regarded as having been killed and buried; eh, Harold?"

"Certainly murdered last night," said Mrs. Harold, "by that awful woman, Mrs. Proudie."

"I wonder you did not make a dash at her and pull her out of the arm-chair," said Miss Dunstable. "I was expecting it, and thought that I should come to grief in the scrimmage."

"I never knew a lady do such a brazen-faced thing before," said Miss Kerrigy, a travelling friend of Miss Dunstable's.

"Nor I—never; in a public place, too," said Dr. Easyman, a medical gentleman, who also often accompanied her.

"As for brass," said Mr. Supplehouse, "she would never stop at anything for want of that. It is well that she has enough, for the poor bishop is but badly provided."

"I hardly heard what it was she did say," said Harold Smith; "so I could not answer her, you know. Something about Sundays, I believe."

"She hoped you would not put the South Sea islanders up to Sabbath travelling," said Mr. Sowerby.

"And specially begged that you would establish Lord's-day schools," said Mrs. Smith; and then they all went to work and picked Mrs. Proudie to pieces

from the top ribbon of her cap down to the sole of her slipper.

"And then she expects the poor parsons to fall in love with her daughters. That 's the hardest thing of all," said Miss Dunstable. But, on the whole, when our vicar went to bed he did not feel that he had spent a profitable Sunday.

CHAPTER VIII.

GATHERUM CASTLE.

On the Tuesday morning Mark did receive his wife's letter and the ten-pound note, whereby a strong proof was given of the honesty of the post-office people in Barsetshire. That letter, written as it had been in a hurry, while Robin postboy was drinking a single mug of beer,—well, what of it if it was half filled a second time?—was nevertheless eloquent of his wife's love and of her great triumph. "I have only half a moment to send you the money," she said, "for the postman is here waiting. When I see you I 'll explain why I am so hurried. Let me know that you get it safe. It is all right now, and Lady Lufton was here not a minute ago. She did not quite like it; about Gatherum Castle I mean; but you 'll hear *nothing about it.* Only remember that *you must dine* at Framley Court on Wednesday week. *I have promised for you.* You will; won't you, dearest? I shall come and fetch you away if you attempt to stay longer than you have said. But I 'm sure you won't. God bless you, my own one! Mr. Jones gave us the same sermon he preached the second Sunday after Easter. Twice in the same year is too often. God bless you! The children *are quite well.* Mark sends a big kiss.—Your own F."

Robarts, as he read this letter and crumpled the note up into his pocket, felt that it was much more satis-

factory than he deserved. He knew that there must have been a fight, and that his wife, fighting loyally on his behalf, had got the best of it; and he knew also that her victory had not been owing to the goodness of her cause. He frequently declared to himself that he would not be afraid of Lady Lufton; but nevertheless these tidings that no reproaches were to be made to him afforded him great relief. On the following Friday they all went to the duke's, and found that the bishop and Mrs. Proudie were there before them; as were also sundry other people, mostly of some note either in the estimation of the world at large or of that of West Barsetshire. Lord Boanerges was there, an old man who would have his own way in everything, and who was regarded by all men, apparently even by the duke himself—as an intellectual king, by no means of the constitutional kind—as an intellectual emperor, rather, who took upon himself to rule all questions of mind without the assistance of any ministers whatever. And Baron Brawl was of the party, one of her Majesty's puisne judges, as jovial a guest as ever entered a country house; but given to be rather sharp withal in his jovialities. And there was Mr. Green Walker, a young but rising man, the same who lectured not long since on a popular subject to his constituents at the Crewe Junction. Mr. Green Walker was a nephew of the Marchioness of Hartletop, and the Marchioness of Hartletop was a friend of the Duke of Omnium's. Mr. Mark Robarts was certainly elated when he ascertained who composed the company of which he had been so earnestly pressed to make a portion. Would it have been wise in him to forego this on account of the prejudices of Lady Lufton?

As the guests were so many and so great, the huge front portals of Gatherum Castle were thrown open, and the vast hall, adorned with trophies,—with marble busts from Italy and armour from Wardour Street,—was thronged with gentlemen and ladies, and gave forth unwonted echoes to many a footstep. His grace himself, when Mark arrived there with Sowerby and Miss Dunstable,—for in this instance Miss Dunstable did travel in the phaeton, while Mark occupied a seat in the dicky,—his grace himself was at this moment in the drawing-room, and nothing could exceed his urbanity.

"Oh, Miss Dunstable," he said, taking that lady by the hand, and leading her up to the fire, "now I feel for the first time that Gatherum Castle has not been built for nothing."

"Nobody ever supposed it was, your grace," said Miss Dunstable. "I am sure the architect did not think so when his bill was paid." And Miss Dunstable put her toes up on the fender to warm them with as much self-possession as though her father had been a duke also, instead of a quack doctor.

"We have given the strictest orders about the parrot," said the duke.

"Ah! but I have not brought him after all," said Miss Dunstable.

"And I have had an aviary built on purpose,—just such as parrots are used to in their own country. Well, Miss Dunstable, I do call that unkind. Is it too late to send for him?"

"He and Dr. Easyman are travelling together. The truth was, I could not rob the doctor of his companion."

"Why? I have had another aviary built for him.

I declare, Miss Dunstable, the honour you are doing me is shorn of half its glory. But the poodle,—I still trust in the poodle."

"And your grace's trust shall not in that respect be in vain. Where is he, I wonder?" And Miss Dunstable looked round as though she expected that somebody would certainly have brought her dog in after her. "I declare I must go and look for him. Only think if they were to put him among your grace's dogs,—how his morals would be destroyed!"

"Miss Dunstable, is that intended to be personal?" but the lady had turned away from the fire, and the duke was able to welcome his other guests. This he did with much courtesy. "Sowerby," he said, "I am glad to find that you have survived the lecture. I can assure you I had fears for you."

"I was brought back to life after considerable delay by the administration of tonics at the Dragon of Wantly. Will your grace allow me to present to you Mr. Robarts, who on that occasion was not so fortunate. It was found necessary to carry him off to the palace, where he was obliged to undergo very vigorous treatment." And then the duke shook hands with Mr. Robarts, assuring him that he was most happy to make his acquaintance. He had often heard of him since he came into the county; and then he asked after Lord Lufton, regretting that he had been unable to induce his lordship to come to Gatherum Castle.

"But you had a diversion at the lecture, I am told," continued the duke. "There was a second performer, was there not, who almost eclipsed poor Harold Smith?" And then Mr. Sowerby gave an amusing sketch of the little Proudie episode.

"It has, of course, ruined your brother-in-law for ever as a lecturer," said the duke, laughing.

"If so, we shall feel ourselves under the deepest obligations to Mrs. Proudie," said Mr. Sowerby. And then Harold Smith himself came up and received the duke's sincere and hearty congratulations on the success of his enterprise at Barchester. Mark Robarts had now turned away, and his attention was suddenly arrested by the loud voice of Miss Dunstable, who had stumbled across some very dear friends in her passage through the rooms, and who by no means hid from the public her delight upon the occasion.

"Well,—well,—well!" she exclaimed, and then she seized upon a very quiet-looking, well-dressed, attractive young woman who was walking towards her, in company with a gentleman. The gentleman and lady, as it turned out, were husband and wife. "Well,—well,—well! I hardly hoped for this." And then she took hold of the lady and kissed her enthusiastically, and after that grasped both the gentleman's hands, shaking them stoutly.

"And what a deal I shall have to say to you!" she went on. "You 'll upset all my other plans. But, Mary, my dear, how long are you going to stay here? I go,—let me see,—I forget when, but it 's all put down in a book upstairs. But the next stage is at Mrs. Proudie's. I shan't meet you there, I suppose. And now, Frank, how 's the governor?" The gentleman called Frank declared that the governor was all right—"mad about the hounds, of course, you know."

"Well, my dear, that 's better than the hounds being mad about him, like the poor gentleman they 've put into a statue. But talking of hounds, Frank, how

"Well,— well,— well! I hardly hoped for this."

"Well,— well,— well! I hardly hoped for this."

badly they manage their foxes at Chaldicotes. I was out hunting all one day——"

"You out hunting!" said the lady called Mary.

"And why should n't I go out hunting? I 'll tell you what, Mrs. Proudie was out hunting too. But they did n't catch a single fox; and, if you must have the truth, it seemed to me to be rather slow."

"You were in the wrong division of the county," said the gentleman called Frank.

"Of course I was. When I really want to practice hunting I 'll go to Greshamsbury; not a doubt about that."

"Or to Boxall Hill," said the lady. "You 'll find quite as much zeal there as at Greshamsbury."

"And more discretion, you should add," said the gentleman.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Miss Dunstable; "your discretion indeed! But you have not told me a word about Lady Arabella."

"My mother is quite well," said the gentleman.

"And the doctor? By-the-bye, my dear, I 've had such a letter from the doctor; only two days ago. I 'll show it you upstairs to-morrow. But mind, it must be a positive secret. If he goes on in this way he 'll get himself into the Tower, or Coventry, or a blue-book, or some dreadful place."

"Why, what has he said?"

"Never you mind, Master Frank: I don't mean to show you the letter, you may be sure of that. But if your wife will swear three times on a poker and tongs that she won't reveal, I 'll show it to her. And so you are quite settled at Boxall Hill, are you?"

"Frank's horses are settled; and the dogs nearly

so," said Frank's wife; "but I can't boast much of anything else yet."

"Well, there 's a good time coming. I must go and change my things now. But, Mary, mind you get near me this evening; I have such a deal to say to you." And then Miss Dunstable marched out of the room.

All this had been said in so loud a voice that it was, as a matter of course, overheard by Mark Robarts,—that part of the conversation, I mean, which had come from Miss Dunstable. And then Mark learned that this was young Frank Gresham of Boxall Hill, son of old Mr. Gresham of Greshamsbury. Frank had lately married a great heiress; a greater heiress, men said, even than Miss Dunstable; and as the marriage was hardly as yet more than six months old the Barsetshire world was still full of it.

"The two heiresses seem to be very loving, don't they?" said Mr. Supplehouse. "Birds of a feather flock together, you know. But they did say some little time ago that young Gresham was to have married Miss Dunstable herself."

"Miss Dunstable? why, she might almost be his mother," said Mark.

"That makes but little difference. He was obliged to marry money, and I believe there is no doubt that he did at one time propose to Miss Dunstable."

"I have had a letter from Lufton," Mr. Sowerby said to him the next morning. "He declares that the delay was all your fault. You were to have told Lady Lufton before he did anything, and he was waiting to write about it till he heard from you. It seems that you never said a word to her ladyship on the subject."

"I never did, certainly. My commission from Lufton was to break the matter to her when I found her in a proper humour for receiving it. If you knew Lady Lufton as well as I do, you would know that it is not every day that she would be in a humour for such tidings."

"And so I was to be kept waiting indefinitely because you two between you were afraid of an old woman! However, I have not a word to say against her, and the matter is settled now."

"Has the farm been sold?"

"Not a bit of it. The dowager could not bring her mind to suffer such profanation for the Lufton acres, and so she sold five thousand pounds out of the funds and sent the money to Lufton as a present;—sent it to him without saying a word, only hoping that it would suffice for his wants. I wish I had a mother, I know."

Mark found it impossible at the moment to make any remark upon what had been told him, but he felt a sudden qualm of conscience and a wish that he was at Framley instead of at Gatherum Castle at the present moment. He knew a good deal respecting Lady Lufton's income and the manner in which it was spent. It was very handsome for a single lady, but then she lived in a free and open-handed style; her charities were noble; there was no reason why she should save money, and her annual income was usually spent within the year. Mark knew this, and he knew also that nothing short of an impossibility to maintain them would induce her to lessen her charities. She had now given away a portion of her principal to save the property of her son,—her son who was so much more opu-

lent than herself,—upon whose means, too, the world made fewer effectual claims. And Mark knew, too, something of the purpose for which this money had gone. There had been unsettled gambling claims between Sowerby and Lord Lufton, originating in affairs of the turf. It had now been going on for four years, almost from the period when Lord Lufton had become of age. He had before now spoken to Robarts on the matter with much bitter anger, alleging that Mr. Sowerby was treating him unfairly, nay, dishonestly,—that he was claiming money that was not due to him; and then he declared more than once that he would bring the matter before the Jockey Club. But Mark, knowing that Lord Lufton was not clear-sighted in these matters, and believing it to be impossible that Mr. Sowerby should actually endeavour to defraud his friend, had smoothed down the young lord's anger, and recommended him to get the case referred to some private arbiter. All this had afterwards been discussed between Robarts and Mr. Sowerby himself, and hence had originated their intimacy. The matter was so referred, Mr. Sowerby naming the referee; and Lord Lufton, when the matter was given against him, took it easily. His anger was over by that time. "I 've been clean done among them," he said to Mark, laughing; "but it does not signify; a man must pay for his experience. Of course, Sowerby thinks it all right; I am bound to suppose so." And then there had been some further delay as to the amount, and part of the money had been paid to a third person, and a bill had been given, and Heaven and the Jews only know how much money Lord Lufton had paid in all. And now it was ended by his handing over to some wretched

villain of a money-dealer, on behalf of Mr. Sowerby, the enormous sum of five thousand pounds, which had been deducted from the means of his mother, Lady Lufton!

Mark, as he thought of all this, could not but feel a certain animosity against Mr. Sowerby,—could not but suspect that he was a bad man. Nay, must he not have known that he was very bad? And yet he continued walking with him through the duke's grounds, still talking about Lord Lufton's affairs, and still listening with interest to what Sowerby told him of his own. "No man was ever robbed as I have been," said he. "But I shall win through yet, in spite of them all. But those Jews, Mark"—he had become very intimate with him in these latter days—"whatever you do, keep clear of them. Why, I could paper a room with their signatures; and yet I never had a claim upon one of them, though they always have claims on me!"

I have said above that this affair of Lord Lufton's was ended, but it now appeared to Mark that it was not quite ended. "Tell Lufton, you know," said Sowerby, "that every bit of paper with his name has been taken up, except what that ruffian Tozer has. Tozer may have one bill, I believe,—something that was not given up when it was renewed. But I 'll make my lawyer Gumption get that up. It may cost ten pounds or twenty pounds, not more. You 'll remember that when you see Lufton, will you?"

"You 'll see Lufton, in all probability, before I shall."

"Oh, did I not tell you? He 's going to Framley Court at once. You 'll find him there when you return."

"Find him at Framley!"

"Yes; this little cadeau from his mother has touched his filial heart. He is rushing home to Framley to pay back the dowager's hard moidores in soft caresses. I wish I had a mother; I know that." And Mark still felt that he feared Mr. Sowerby, but he could not make up his mind to break away from him.

And there was much talk of politics just then at the castle. Not that the duke joined in it with any enthusiasm. He was a whig,—a huge mountain of a colossal whig. All the world knew that. No opponent would have dreamed of tampering with his whiggery, nor would any brother whig have dreamed of doubting it. But he was a whig who gave very little practical support to any set of men, and very little practical opposition to any other set. He was above troubling himself with such sublunar matters. At election time he supported, and always carried, whig candidates: and in return he had been appointed lord-lieutenant of the county by one whig minister, and had received the Garter from another. But these things were matters of course to a Duke of Omnium. He was born to be a lord-lieutenant and a knight of the Garter. But not the less on account of his apathy, or rather quiescence, was it thought that Gatherum Castle was a fitting place in which politicians might express to each other their present hopes and future aims, and concoct together little plots in a half-serious and half-mocking way. Indeed, it was hinted that Mr. Supplehouse and Harold Smith, with one or two others, were at Gatherum for this express purpose. Mr. Fothergill, too, was a noted politician, and was supposed to know the duke's mind well; and Mr. Green Walker, the nephew of the marchioness, was a young man whom

the duke desired to have brought forward. Mr. Sowerby also was the duke's own member, and so the occasion suited well for the interchange of a few ideas.

The then prime minister, angry as many men were with him, had not been altogether unsuccessful. He had brought the Russian war to a close, which, if not glorious, was at any rate much more so than Englishmen at one time had ventured to hope. And he had had wonderful luck in that Indian mutiny. It is true that many of those even who voted with him would declare that this was in no way attributable to him. Great men had risen in India and done all that. Even his minister there, the governor whom he had sent out, was not allowed in those days any credit for the success which was achieved under his orders. There was great reason to doubt the man at the helm. But nevertheless he had been lucky. There is no merit in a public man like success! But now, when the evil days were well-nigh over, came the question whether he had not been too successful. When a man has nailed fortune to his chariot-wheels he is apt to travel about in rather a proud fashion. There are servants who think that their masters cannot do without them; and the public also may occasionally have some such servant. What if this too successful minister were one of them! And then a discreet, commonplace, zealous member of the Lower House does not like to be jeered at when he does his duty by his constituents and asks a few questions. An all-successful minister who cannot keep his triumph to himself, but must needs drive about in a proud fashion, laughing at commonplace zealous members,—laughing even occasionally at members who are

by no means commonplace, which is outrageous!—May it not be as well to ostracise such a one for a while?

"Had we not better throw in our shells against him?" says Mr. Harold Smith.

"Let us throw in our shells, by all means," says Mr. Supplehouse, mindful as Juno of his despised charms. And when Mr. Supplehouse declares himself an enemy, men know how much it means. They know that that much-belaboured Head of Affairs must succumb to the terrible blows which are now in store for him. "Yes, we will throw in our shells." And Mr. Supplehouse rises from his chair with gleaming eyes. "Has not Greece as noble sons as him? ay, and much nobler, traitor that he is. We must judge a man by his friends," says Mr. Supplehouse; and he points away to the East, where our dear allies the French are supposed to live, and where our Head of Affairs is supposed to have too close an intimacy.

They all understand this, even Mr. Green Walker. "I don't know that he is any good to any of us at all, now," says the talented member for the Crewe Junction. "He 's a great deal too uppish to suit my book; and I know a great many people that think so too. There 's my uncle——"

"He 's the best fellow in the world," said Mr. Fothergill, who felt, perhaps, that that coming revelation about Mr. Green Walker's uncle might not be of use to them; "but the fact is one gets tired of the same man always. One does not like partridge every day. As for me, I have nothing to do with it myself; but I would certainly like to change the dish."

"If we 're merely to do as we are bid, and have no

voice of our own, I don't see what 's the good of going to the shop at all," said Mr. Sowerby.

"Not the least use," said Mr. Supplehouse. "We are false to our constituents in submitting to such a dominion."

"Let 's have a change, then," said Mr. Sowerby. "The matter 's pretty much in our own hands."

"Altogether," said Mr. Green Walker. "That 's what my uncle always says."

"The Manchester men will only be too happy for the chance," said Mr. Harold Smith.

"And as for the high-and-dry gentlemen," said Mr. Sowerby, "it 's not very likely that they will object to pick up the fruit when we shake the tree."

"As to picking up the fruit, that 's as may be," said Mr. Supplehouse. Was he not the man to save the nation; and if so, why should he not pick up the fruit himself? Had not the greatest power in the country pointed him out as such a saviour? What though the country at the present moment needed no more saving, might there not, nevertheless, be a good time coming? Were there not rumours of other wars still prevalent? He thought of that country to which he had pointed, and of that friend of his enemies, and remembered that there might be still work for a mighty saviour. The public mind was now awake, and understood what it was about. When a man gets into his head an idea that the public voice calls for him, it is astonishing how great becomes his trust in the wisdom of the public. Vox populi vox Dei. "Has it not been so always?" he says to himself, as he gets up and as he goes to bed. And then Mr. Supplehouse felt that he was the master mind there at Gatherum Castle, and that those there

were all puppets in his hand. It is such a pleasant thing to feel that one's friends are puppets, and that the strings are in one's own possession. But what if Mr. Supplehouse himself were a puppet? Some months afterwards, when the much-belaboured Head of Affairs was in very truth made to retire, when unkind shells were thrown in against him in great numbers, when he exclaimed "Et tu, Brute!" till the words were stereotyped upon his lips, all men in all places talked much about the great Gatherum Castle confederation. The Duke of Omnium, the world said, had taken into his high consideration the state of affairs, and seeing with his eagle's eye that the welfare of his countrymen at large required that some great step should be initiated, he had at once summoned to his mansion many members of the Lower House, and some also of the House of Lords;—mention was here especially made of the all-venerable and all-wise Lord Boanerges;—and men went on to say that there, in deep conclave, he had made known to them his views. It was thus agreed that the Head of Affairs, whig as he was, must fall. The country required it, and the duke did his duty. This was the beginning, the world said, of that celebrated confederation, by which the ministry was overturned, and,—as the Goody Twoshoes added,—the country saved. But the Jupiter took all the credit to itself; and the Jupiter was not far wrong. All the credit was due to the Jupiter,—in that, as in everything else.

In the meantime the Duke of Omnium entertained his guests in the quiet princely style, but did not condescend to have much conversation on politics either with Mr. Supplehouse or with Mr. Harold Smith. And

as for Lord Boanerges, he spent the morning on which the above-described conversation took place in teaching Miss Dunstable to blow soap-bubbles on scientific principles.

"Dear, dear!" said Miss Dunstable, as sparks of knowledge came flying in upon her mind. "I always thought that a soap-bubble was a soap-bubble, and I never asked the reason why. One does n't, you know, my lord."

"Pardon me, Miss Dunstable," said the old lord, "one does; but nine hundred and ninety-nine do not."

"And the nine hundred and ninety-nine have the best of it," said Miss Dunstable. "What pleasure can one have in a ghost after one has seen the phosphorus rubbed on?"

"Quite true, my dear lady. 'If ignorance be bliss, 't is folly to be wise.' It all lies in the 'if.'"

Then Miss Dunstable began to sing—

> "'What tho' I trace each herb and flower
> That sips the morning dew—'

—you know the rest, my lord." Lord Boanerges did know almost everything, but he did not know that; and so Miss Dunstable went on—

> "'Did I not own Jehovah's power
> How vain were all I knew.'"

"Exactly, exactly, Miss Dunstable," said his lordship; "but why not own the power and trace the flower as well? Perhaps one might help the other." Upon the whole, I am afraid that Lord Boanerges got the best of it. But then, that is his line. He has been getting the best of it all his life.

It was observed by all that the duke was especially attentive to young Mr. Frank Gresham, the gentleman on whom and on whose wife Miss Dunstable had seized so vehemently. This Mr. Gresham was the richest commoner in the county, and it was rumoured that at the next election he would be one of the members for the East Riding. Now the duke had little or nothing to do with the East Riding, and it was well known that young Gresham would be brought forward as a strong conservative. But, nevertheless, his acres were so extensive and his money so plentiful that he was worth a duke's notice. Mr. Sowerby, also, was almost more than civil to him, as was natural, seeing that this very young man by a mere scratch of his pen could turn a scrap of paper into a bank-note of almost fabulous value.

"So you have the East Barsetshire hounds at Boxall Hill; have you not?" said the duke.

"The hounds are there" said Frank. "But I am not the master."

"Oh! I understood——"

"My father has them. But he finds Boxall Hill more centrical than Greshamsbury. The dogs and horses have to go shorter distances."

"Boxall Hill is very centrical."

"Oh, exactly!"

"And your young gorse coverts are doing well?"

"Pretty well. Gorse won't thrive every where, I find. I wish it would."

"That 's just what I say to Fothergill; and then where there 's much woodland you can't get the vermin to leave it."

"But we have n't a tree at Boxall Hill," said Mrs. Gresham.

"Ah, yes; you 're new there, certainly; you 've enough of it at Greshamsbury in all conscience. There 's a larger extent of wood there than we have; is n't there, Fothergill?" Mr. Fothergill said that the Greshamsbury woods were very extensive, but that, perhaps, he thought——

"Oh, ah! I know," said the duke. "The Black Forest in its old days was nothing to Gatherum woods, according to Fothergill. And then, again, nothing in East Barsetshire could be equal to anything in West Barsetshire. Is n't that it; eh, Fothergill?" Mr. Fothergill professed that he had been brought up in that faith and intended to die in it.

"Your exotics at Boxall Hill are very fine, magnificent!" said Mr. Sowerby.

"I 'd sooner have one full-grown oak standing in its pride alone," said young Gresham, rather grandiloquently, "than all the exotics in the world."

"They 'll come in due time," said the duke.

"But the due time won't be in my days. And so they 're going to cut down Chaldicotes forest, are they, Mr. Sowerby?"

"Well, I can't tell you that. They are going to disforest it. I have been ranger since I was twenty-two, and I don't yet know whether that means cutting down."

"Not only cutting down, but rooting up," said Mr. Fothergill.

"It 's a murderous shame," said Frank Gresham; "and I will say one thing, I don't think any but a whig government would do it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed his grace. "At any rate, I 'm sure of this," he said, "that if a conservative gov-

ernment did do it, the whigs would be just as indignant as you are now."

"I 'll tell you what you ought to do, Mr. Gresham," said Sowerby: "put in an offer for the whole of the West Barsetshire Crown property; they will be very glad to sell it."

"And we should be delighted to welcome you on this side of the border," said the duke. Young Gresham did feel rather flattered. There were not many men in the county to whom such an offer could be made without an absurdity. It might be doubted whether the duke himself could purchase the Chase of Chaldicotes with ready money; but that he, Gresham, could do so,—he and his wife between them,—no man did doubt. And then Mr. Gresham thought of a former day when he had once been at Gatherum Castle. He had been poor enough then, and the duke had not treated him in the most courteous manner in the world. How hard it is for a rich man not to lean upon his riches!—harder, indeed, than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

All Barsetshire knew,—at any rate all West Barsetshire,—that Miss Dunstable had been brought down in those parts in order that Mr. Sowerby might marry her. It was not surmised that Miss Dunstable herself had had any previous notice of this arrangement, but it was supposed that the thing would turn out as a matter of course. Mr. Sowerby had no money, but then he was witty, clever, good-looking, and a member of Parliament. He lived before the world, represented an old family, and had an old place. How could Miss Dunstable possibly do better? She was not so young now, and it was time that she should look about her.

The suggestion, as regarded Mr. Sowerby, was certainly true, and was not the less so as regarded some of Mr. Sowerby's friends. His sister, Mrs. Harold Smith, had devoted herself to the work, and with this view had run up a dear friendship with Miss Dunstable. The bishop had intimated, nodding his head knowingly, that it would be a very good thing. Mrs. Proudie had given in her adherence. Mr. Supplehouse had been made to understand that it must be a case of "Paws off" with him, as long as he remained in that part of the world; and even the duke himself had desired Fothergill to manage it.

"He owes me an enormous sum of money," said the duke, who held all Mr. Sowerby's title-deeds, "and I doubt whether the security will be sufficient."

"Your grace will find the security quite sufficient," said Mr. Fothergill; "but nevertheless it would be a good match."

"Very good," said the duke. And then it became Mr. Fothergill's duty to see that Mr. Sowerby and Miss Dunstable became man and wife as speedily as possible. Some of the party, who were more wide awake than others, declared that he had made the offer; others, that he was just going to do so; and one very knowing lady went so far at one time as to say that he was making it at that moment. Bets also were laid as to the lady's answer, as to the terms of the settlement, and as to the period of the marriage, —of all which poor Miss Dunstable of course knew nothing. Mr. Sowerby, in spite of the publicity of his proceedings, proceeded in the matter very well. He said little about it to those who joked with him, but carried on the fight with what best knowledge he had

in such matters. But so much it is given to us to declare with certainty, that he had not proposed on the evening previous to the morning fixed for the departure of Mark Robarts. During the last two days Mr. Sowerby's intimacy with Mark had grown warmer and warmer. He had talked to the vicar confidentially about the doings of these big-wigs now present at the castle, as though there were no other guest there with whom he could speak in so free a manner. He confided, it seemed, much more in Mark than his brother-in-law, Harold Smith, or in any of his brother members of Parliament, and had altogether opened his heart to him in this affair of his anticipated marriage. Now Mr. Sowerby was a man of mark in the world, and all this flattered our young clergyman not a little. On that evening before Robarts went away Sowerby asked him to come up into his bedroom when the whole party was breaking up, and there got him into an easy-chair, while he, Sowerby, walked up and down the room.

"You can hardly tell, my dear fellow," said he, "the state of nervous anxiety in which this puts me."

"Why don't you ask her and have done with it? She seems to me to be fond of your society."

"Ah, it is not that only; there are wheels within wheels." Then he walked once or twice up and down the room, during which Mark thought that he might as well go to bed.

"Not that I mind telling you everything," said Sowerby. "I am infernally hard up for a little ready money just at the present moment. It may be, and indeed I think it will be, the case that I shall be ruined in this matter for the want of it."

"Could not Harold Smith give it you?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You don't know Harold Smith. Did you ever hear of his lending a man a shilling in his life?"

"Or Supplehouse?"

"Lord love you! You see me and Supplehouse together here, and he comes and stays at my house, and all that; but Supplehouse and I are no friends. Look you here, Mark,—I would do more for your little finger than for his whole hand, including the pen which he holds in it. Fothergill indeed might;—but then I know Fothergill is pressed himself at the present moment. It is deuced hard, is n't it? I must give up the whole game if I can't put my hand upon 400*l.* within the next two days."

"Ask her for it, herself."

"What, the woman I wish to marry! No, Mark, I 'm not quite come to that. I would sooner lose her than that." Mark sat silent, gazing at the fire and wishing that he was in his own bedroom. He had an idea that Mr. Sowerby wished him to produce this 400*l.*, and he knew also that he had not 400*l.* in the world, and that if he had he would be acting very foolishly to give it to Mr. Sowerby. But nevertheless he felt half fascinated by the man, and half afraid of him.

"Lufton owes it to me to do more than this," continued Mr. Sowerby, "but then Lufton is not here."

"Why, he has just paid five thousand pounds for you."

"Paid five thousand pounds for me! Indeed he has done no such thing. Not a sixpence of it came into my hands. Believe me, Mark, you don't know the whole of that yet. Not that I mean to say a word against Lufton. He is the soul of honour;—though

so deucedly dilatory in money matters. He thought he was right all through that affair, but no man was ever so confoundedly wrong. Why, don't you remember that that was the very view you took of it yourself?"

"I remember saying that I thought he was mistaken."

"Of course he was mistaken. And dearly the mistake cost me. I had to make good the money for two or three years. And my property is not like his;—I wish it were."

"Marry Miss Dunstable, and that will set it all right for you."

"Ah! so I would if I had this money. At any rate I would bring it to the point. Now, I tell you what, Mark, if you 'll assist me at this strait I 'll never forget it. And the time will come round when I may be able to do something for you."

"I have not got a hundred, no, not fifty pounds by me in the world."

"Of course you 've not. Men don't walk about the streets with 400*l.* in their pockets. I don't suppose there 's a single man here in the house with such a sum in his bankers', unless it be the duke."

"What is it you want, then?"

"Why, your name, to be sure. Believe me, my dear fellow, I would not ask you really to put your hand into your pocket to such a tune as that. Allow me to draw on you for that amount at three months. Long before that time I shall be flush enough." And then, before Mark could answer, he had a bill stamp and pen and ink out on the table before him, and was filling in the bill as though his friend had already given his consent.

"Upon my word, Sowerby, I had rather not do that."

"Why? what are you afraid of?" Mr. Sowerby asked this very sharply. "Did you ever hear of my having neglected to take up a bill when it fell due?" Robarts thought that he had heard of such a thing; but in his confusion he was not exactly sure, and so he said nothing. "No, my boy; I have not come to that. Look here; just you write, 'Accepted, Mark Robarts,' across that, and then you shall never hear of the transaction again;—and you will have obliged me for ever."

"As a clergyman it would be wrong of me," said Robarts.

"As a clergyman! Come, Mark! If you don't like to do as much as that for a friend, say so; but don't let us have that sort of humbug. If there be one class of men whose names would be found more frequent on the backs of bills in the provincial banks than another, clergymen are that class. Come, old fellow, you won't throw me over when I am so hard pushed." Mark Robarts took the pen and signed the bill. It was the first time in his life that he had ever done such an act. Sowerby then shook him cordially by the hand, and he walked off to his own bedroom a wretched man.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VICAR'S RETURN.

THE next morning Mr. Robarts took leave of all his grand friends with a heavy heart. He had lain awake half the night thinking of what he had done and trying to reconcile himself to his position. He had not well left Mr. Sowerby's room before he felt certain that at the end of three months he would again be troubled about that 400*l.* As he went along the passage, all the man's known antecedents crowded upon him much quicker than he could remember them when seated in that arm-chair with the bill stamp before him, and the pen and ink ready to his hand. He remembered what Lord Lufton had told him,—how he had complained of having been left in the lurch; he thought of all the stories current through the entire county as to the impossibility of getting money from Chaldicotes; he brought to mind the known character of the man, and then he knew that he must prepare himself to make good a portion at least of that heavy payment. Why had he come to this horrid place? Had he not everything at home at Framley which the heart of man could desire? No; the heart of man can desire deaneries, —the heart, that is, of a man vicar; and the heart of the man dean can desire bishoprics; and before the eyes of the man bishop does there not loom the transcendental glory of Lambeth? He had owned to him-

self that he was ambitious; but he had to own to himself now also that he had hitherto taken but a sorry path towards the object of his ambition. On the next morning at breakfast-time, before his horse and gig arrived for him, no one was so bright as his friend Sowerby. "So you are off, are you?" said he.

"Yes, I shall go this morning."

"Say everything that 's kind from me to Lufton. I may possibly see him out hunting; otherwise we shan't meet till the spring. As to my going to Framley, that 's out of the question. Her ladyship would look for my tail, and swear that she smelt brimstone. By-bye, old fellow!"

The German student when he first made his bargain with the devil felt an indescribable attraction to his new friend; and such was the case now with Robarts. He shook Sowerby's hand very warmly, said that he hoped he should meet him soon somewhere, and professed himself specially anxious to hear how that affair with the lady came off. As he had made his bargain, —as he had undertaken to pay nearly half-a-year's income for his dear friend,—ought he not to have as much value as possible for his money? If the dear friendship of this flash member of Parliament did not represent that value, what else did do so? But then he felt, or fancied that he felt, that Mr. Sowerby did not care for him so much this morning as he had done on the previous evening. "By-bye," said Mr. Sowerby; but he spoke no word as to such future meetings, nor did he even promise to write. Mr. Sowerby probably had many things on his mind; and it might be that it behoved him, having finished one piece of business, immediately to look to another.

The sum for which Robarts had made himself responsible,—which he so much feared that he would be called upon to pay,—was very nearly half-a-year's income; and as yet he had not put by one shilling since he had been married. When he found himself settled in his parsonage, he found also that all the world regarded him as a rich man. He had taken the dictum of all the world as true, and had set himself to work to live comfortably. He had no absolute need of a curate; but he could afford the 70*l.*—as Lady Lufton had said rather injudiciously; and by keeping Jones in the parish he would be acting charitably to a brother clergyman, and would also place himself in a more independent position. Lady Lufton had wished to see her pet clergyman well-to-do and comfortable; but now, as matters had turned out, she much regretted this affair of the curate. Mr. Jones, she said to herself, more than once, must be made to depart from Framley. He had given his wife a pony-carriage, and for himself he had a saddle-horse, and a second horse for his gig. A man in his position, well-to-do as he was, required as much as that. He had a footman also, and a gardener, and a groom. The two latter were absolutely necessary, but about the former there had been a question. His wife had been decidedly hostile to the footman; but in all such matters as that, to doubt is to be lost. When the footman had been discussed for a week it became quite clear to the master that he also was a necessary.

As he drove home that morning he pronounced to himself the doom of that footman, and the doom also of that saddle-horse. They at any rate should go. And then he would spend no more money in trips to

Scotland. And above all, he would keep out of the bedrooms of impoverished members of Parliament at the witching hour of midnight. Such resolves did he make to himself as he drove home; and bethought himself wearily how that 400*l.* might be made to be forthcoming. As to any assistance in the matter from Sowerby,—of that he gave himself no promise. But he almost felt himself happy again as his wife came out into the porch to meet him with a silk shawl over her head, and pretending to shiver as she watched him descending from his gig. "My dear old man," she said, as she led him into the warm drawing-room with all his wrappings still about him, "you must be starved." But Mark during the whole drive had been thinking too much of that transaction in Mr. Sowerby's bedroom to remember that the air was cold. Now he had his arm round his own dear Fanny's waist; but was he to tell her of that transaction? At any rate he would not do it now, while his two boys were in his arms, rubbing the moisture from his whiskers with their kisses. After all, what is there equal to that coming home?

"And so Lufton is here. I say, Frank, gently, old boy,"—Frank was his eldest son,—"you 'll have baby into the fender."

"Let me take baby. It 's impossible to hold the two of them, they are so strong," said the proud mother. "Oh, yes, he came home early yesterday."

"Have you seen him?"

"He was here yesterday, with her ladyship; and I lunched there to-day. The letter came, you know, in time to stop the Merediths. They don't go till to-morrow, so you will meet them after all. Sir George

is wild about it, but Lady Lufton would have her way. You never saw her in such a state as she is."

"Good spirits, eh?"

"I should think so. All Lord Lufton's horses are coming, and he 's to be here till March."

"Till March!"

"So her ladyship whispered to me. She could not conceal her triumph at his coming. He 's going to give up Leicestershire this year altogether. I wonder what has brought it all about?" Mark knew very well what had brought it about. He had been made acquainted, as the reader has also, with the price at which Lady Lufton had purchased her son's visit. But no one had told Mrs. Robarts that the mother had made her son a present of five thousand pounds.

"She 's in a good humour about everything now," continued Fanny; "so you need say nothing at all about Gatherum Castle."

"But she was very angry when she first heard it; was she not?"

"Well, Mark, to tell the truth, she was; and we had quite a scene there up in her own room upstairs,—Justinia and I. She had heard something else that she did not like at the same time; and then;—but you know her way. She blazed up quite hot."

"And said all manner of horrid things about me."

"About the duke she did. You know she never did like the duke. And for the matter of that, neither do I. I tell you that fairly, Master Mark!"

"The duke is not so bad as he 's painted."

"Ah, that 's what you say about another great person. However, he won't come here to trouble us, I suppose. And then I left her, not in the best

temper in the world; for I blazed up too, you must know."

"I am sure you did," said Mark, pressing his arm round her waist.

"And then we were going to have a dreadful war, I thought; and I came home and wrote such a doleful letter to you. But what should happen when I had just closed it, but in came her ladyship,—all alone, and——! But I can't tell you what she did or said; only she behaved beautifully; just like herself too; so full of love and truth and honesty. There 's nobody like her, Mark; and she 's better than all the dukes that ever wore—whatever dukes do wear."

"Horns and hoofs; that 's their usual apparel, according to you and Lady Lufton," said he, remembering what Mr. Sowerby had said of himself.

"You may say what you like about me, Mark, but you shan't abuse Lady Lufton. And if horns and hoofs mean wickedness and dissipation, I believe it 's not far wrong. But get off your big coat and make yourself comfortable." And that was all the scolding that Mark Robarts got from his wife on the occasion of his great iniquity.

"I will certainly tell her about this bill transaction," he said to himself; "but not to-day; not till after I have seen Lufton." That evening they dined at Framley Court, and there they met the young lord. They found Lady Lufton still in high good-humour. Lord Lufton himself was a fine, bright-looking young man; not so tall as Mark Robarts, and with perhaps less intelligence marked on his face; but his features were finer, and there was in his countenance a thorough appearance of good-humour and sweet temper. It

was, indeed, a pleasant face to look upon, and dearly Lady Lufton loved to gaze at it.

"Well, Mark, so you have been among the Philistines?" that was his lordship's first remark. Robarts laughed as he took his friend's hands, and bethought himself how truly that was the case;—that he was, in very truth, already "himself in bonds under Philistian yoke." Alas, alas, it is very hard to break asunder the bonds of the latter-day Philistines. When a Samson does now and then pull a temple down about their ears, is he not sure to be engulfed in the ruin with them? There is no horse-leech that sticks so fast as your latter-day Philistine.

"So you have caught Sir George, after all," said Lady Lufton; and that was nearly all she did say in allusion to his absence. There was afterwards some conversation about the lecture, and from her ladyship's remarks it certainly was apparent that she did not like the people among whom the vicar had been lately staying; but she said no word that was personal to himself, or that could be taken as a reproach. The little episode of Mrs. Proudie's address in the lecture-room had already reached Framley, and it was only to be expected that Lady Lufton should enjoy the joke. She would affect to believe that the body of the lecture had been given by the bishop's wife; and afterwards, when Mark described her costume at that Sunday morning breakfast-table, Lady Lufton insisted on assuming that such had been the dress in which she had exercised her faculties in public.

"I would have given a five-pound note to have heard it," said Sir George.

"So would not I," said Lady Lufton. "When one

hears of such things described so graphically as Mr. Robarts now tells it, one can hardly help laughing. But it would give me great pain to see the wife of one of our bishops place herself in such a situation. For he is a bishop, after all."

"Well, upon my word, my lady, I agree with Meredith," said Lord Lufton. "It must have been good fun. As it did happen, you know,—as the church was doomed to the disgrace,—I should like to have heard it."

"I know you would have been shocked, Ludovic."

"I should have got over that in time, mother. It would have been like a bull-fight, I suppose,—horrible to see, no doubt, but extremely interesting. And Harold Smith, Mark; what did he do all the while?"

"It did n't take so very long, you know," said Robarts.

"And the poor bishop," said Lady Meredith; "how did he look? I really do pity him."

"Well, he was asleep, I think."

"What, slept through it all?" said Sir George.

"It awakened him; and then he jumped up and said something."

"What, out loud, too?"

"Only one word or so."

"What a disgraceful scene!" said Lady Lufton. "To those who remember the good old man who was in the diocese before him it is perfectly shocking. He confirmed you, Ludovic, and you ought to remember him. It was over at Barchester, and you went and lunched with him afterwards."

"I do remember; and especially this, that I never ate such tarts in my life, before or since. The old

man particularly called my attention to them, and seemed remarkably pleased that I concurred in his sentiments. There are no such tarts as those going in the palace now, I 'll be bound."

"Mrs. Proudie will be very happy to do her best for you if you will go and try," said Sir George.

"I beg that he will do no such thing," said Lady Lufton; and that was the only severe word she said about any of Mark's visitings. As Sir George Meredith was there, Robarts could say nothing then to Lord Lufton about Mr. Sowerby and Mr. Sowerby's money affairs; but he did make an appointment for a tête à tête on the next morning.

"You must come down and see my nags, Mark; they came to-day. The Merediths will be off at twelve, and then we can have an hour together." Mark said he would, and then went home with his wife under his arm.

"Well, now, is not she kind?" said Fanny, as soon as they were out on the gravel together.

"She is kind;—kinder than I can tell you just at present. But did you ever know anything so bitter as she is to the poor bishop? And really the bishop is not so bad."

"Yes; I know something much more bitter; and that is what she thinks of the bishop's wife. And you know, Mark, it was so unladylike, her getting up in that way. What must the people of Barchester think of her?"

"As far as I could see, the people of Barchester liked it."

"Nonsense, Mark; they could not. But never mind that now. I want you to own that she is good." And then Mrs. Robarts went on with another long

eulogy on the dowager. Since that affair of the pardon-begging at the parsonage, Mrs. Robarts hardly knew how to think well enough of her friend. And the evening had been so pleasant after the dreadful storm and threatenings of hurricanes; her husband had been so well received after his lapse of judgment; the wounds that had looked so sore had been so thoroughly healed, and everything was so pleasant. How all of this would have been changed had she known of that little bill! At twelve the next morning the lord and the vicar were walking through the Framley stables together. Quite a commotion had been made there, for the larger portion of these buildings had of late years seldom been used. But now all was crowding and activity. Seven or eight very precious animals had followed Lord Lufton from Leicestershire, and all of them required dimensions that were thought to be rather excessive by the Framley old-fashioned groom. My lord, however, had a head man of his own, who took the matter quite into his own hands. Mark, priest as he was, was quite worldly enough to be fond of a good horse; and for some little time allowed Lord Lufton to descant on the merit of this four-year-old filly, and that magnificent Rattlebones colt, out of a Mousetrap mare; but he had other things that lay heavy on his mind, and after bestowing half an hour on the stud, he contrived to get his friend away to the shrubbery walks.

"So you have settled with Sowerby," Robarts began by saying.

"Settled with him; yes, but do you know the price?"

"I believe that you have paid five thousand pounds."

"Yes, and about three before; and that in a matter in which I did not really owe one shilling. Whatever I do in future, I 'll keep out of Sowerby's grip."

"But you don't think he has been unfair to you?"

"Mark, to tell you the truth I have banished the affair from my mind, and don't wish to take it up again. My mother has paid the money to save the property, and of course I must pay her back. But I think I may promise that I will not have any more money dealings with Sowerby. I will not say that he is dishonest, but at any rate he is sharp."

"Well, Lufton, what will you say when I tell you that I have put my name to a bill for him, for four hundred pounds?"

"Say; why I should say——; but you 're joking; a man in your position would never do such a thing."

"But I have done it." Lord Lufton gave a long, low whistle. "He asked me the last night that I was there, making a great favour of it, and declaring that no bill of his had ever yet been dishonoured."

Lord Lufton whistled again. "No bill of his dishonoured! Why, the pocket-books of the Jews are stuffed full of his dishonoured papers! And you have really given him your name for four hundred pounds?"

"I have certainly."

"At what date?"

"Three months."

"And have you thought where you are to get the money?"

"I know very well that I can't get it, not at least by that time. The bankers must renew it for me, and I must pay it by degrees. That is, if Sowerby really does not take it up."

"It is just as likely that he will take up the national debt." Robarts then told him about the projected marriage with Miss Dunstable, giving it as his opinion that the lady would probably accept the gentleman.

"Not at all improbable," said his lordship, "for Sowerby is an agreeable fellow. And if it be so, he will have all that he wants for life. But his creditors will gain nothing. The duke, who has his title-deeds, will doubtless get his money, and the estate will in fact belong to the wife. But the small fry, such as you, will not get a shilling." Poor Mark! He had had an inkling of this before; but it had hardly presented itself to him in such certain terms. It was, then, a positive fact, that in punishment for his weakness in having signed that bill he would have to pay, not only four hundred pounds, but four hundred pounds with interest, and expenses of renewal, and commission, and bill stamps. Yes; he had certainly got among the Philistines during that visit of his to the duke. It began to appear to him pretty clearly that it would have been better for him to have relinquished altogether the glories of Chaldicotes and Gatherum Castle.

And now, how was he to tell his wife?

CHAPTER X.

LUCY ROBARTS.

And now how was he to tell his wife? That was the consideration heavy on Mark Robarts's mind when last we left him; and he turned the matter often in his thoughts before he could bring himself to a resolution. At last he did bring himself to a resolution, and one may say that it was not altogether a bad one, if only he could carry it out. He would ascertain in what bank that bill of his had been discounted. He would ask Sowerby, and if he could not learn from him, he would go to the three banks in Barchester. That it had been taken to one of them he felt tolerably certain. He would explain to the manager his conviction that he would have to make good the amount, his inability to do so at the end of the three months, and the whole state of his income; and then the banker would explain to him how the matter might be arranged. He thought that he could pay 50*l.* every three months with interest. As soon as this should have been concerted with the banker, he would let his wife know all about it. Were he to tell her at the present moment, while the matter was all unsettled, the intelligence would frighten her into illness. But on the next morning there came to him tidings by the hands of Robin postman, which for a long while upset all his plans. The

letter was from Exeter. His father had been taken ill, and had very quickly been pronounced to be in danger. That evening,—the evening on which his sister wrote,—the old man was much worse, and it was desirable that Mark should go off to Exeter as quickly as possible. Of course he went to Exeter,—again leaving the Framley souls at the mercy of the Welsh curate. Framley is only four miles from Silverbridge, and at Silverbridge he was on the direct road to the west. He was, therefore, at Exeter before nightfall on that day. But, nevertheless, he arrived there too late to see his father again alive. The old man's illness had been sudden and rapid, and he expired without again seeing his eldest son. Mark arrived at the house of mourning just as they were learning to realise the full change in their position.

The doctor's career had been on the whole successful, but nevertheless he did not leave behind him as much money as the world had given him credit for possessing. Who ever does? Dr. Robarts had educated a large family, had always lived with every comfort, and had never possessed a shilling but what he had earned himself. A physician's fees come in, no doubt, with comfortable rapidity as soon as rich old gentlemen and middle-aged ladies begin to put their faith in him; but fees run out almost with equal rapidity when a wife and seven children are treated to everything that the world considers most desirable. Mark, we have seen, had been educated at Harrow and Oxford, and it may be said, therefore, that he had received his patrimony early in life. For Gerald Robarts, the second brother, a commission had been bought in a crack regiment. He also had been lucky,

having lived and become a captain in the Crimea; and the purchase-money was lodged for his majority. And John Robarts, the youngest, was a clerk in the Petty Bag Office, and was already assistant private secretary to the Lord Petty Bag himself,—a place of considerable trust, if not hitherto of large emolument; and on his education money had been spent freely, for in these days a young man cannot get into the Petty Bag Office without knowing at least three modern languages; and he must be well up in trigonometry, too, in Bible theology,—or in one dead language,—at his option. And the doctor had four daughters. The two elder were married, including that Blanche with whom Lord Lufton was to have fallen in love at the vicar's wedding. A Devonshire squire had done this in the lord's place. But on marrying her it was necessary that he should have a few thousand pounds, two or three perhaps, and the old doctor had managed that they should be forthcoming. The elder also had not been sent away from the paternal mansion quite empty-handed. There were, therefore, at the time of the doctor's death, two children left at home, of whom one only, Lucy, the younger, will come much across us in the course of our story.

Mark stayed for ten days at Exeter, he and the Devonshire squire having been named as executors in the will. In this document it was explained that the doctor trusted that provision had been made for most of his children. As for his dear son Mark, he said, he was aware that he need be under no uneasiness. On hearing this read Mark smiled sweetly, and looked very gracious; but, nevertheless, his heart did sink somewhat within him, for there had been a hope that a

small windfall, coming now so opportunely, might enable him to rid himself at once of that dreadful Sowerby incubus. And then the will went on to declare that Mary, and Gerald, and Blanche, had also, by God's providence, been placed beyond want. And here, looking into the squire's face, one might have thought that his heart fell a little also; for he had not so full a command of his feelings as his brother-in-law, who had been so much more before the world. To John, the assistant private secretary, was left a legacy of a thousand pounds; and to Jane and Lucy certain sums in certain four per cents., which were quite sufficient to add an efficient value to the hands of those young ladies in the eyes of most prudent young would-be Benedicts. Over and beyond this there was nothing but the furniture, which he desired might be sold, and the proceeds divided among them all. It might come to sixty or seventy pounds apiece, and pay the expenses incidental on his death. And then all men and women there and thereabouts said that old Dr. Robarts had done well. His life had been good and prosperous, and his will was just. And Mark, among others, so declared,—and was so convinced in spite of his own little disappointment. And on the third morning after the reading of the will, Squire Crowdy, of Creamclotted Hall, altogether got over his grief and said that it was all right. And then it was decided that Jane should go home with him,—for there was a brother squire who, it was thought, might have an eye to Jane;—and Lucy, the younger, should be taken to Framley Parsonage. In a fortnight from the receipt of that letter Mark arrived at his own house with his sister Lucy under his wing.

All this interfered greatly with Mark's wise resolution as to the Sowerby-bill incubus. In the first place, he could not get to Barchester as soon as he had intended, and then an idea came across him that possibly it might be well that he should borrow the money of his brother John, explaining the circumstances, of course, and paying him due interest. But he had not liked to broach the subject when they were there in Exeter, standing, as it were, over their father's grave, and so the matter was postponed. There was still ample time for arrangement before the bill would come due, and he would not tell Fanny till he had made up his mind what that arrangement would be. It would kill her, he said to himself over and over again, were he to tell her of it without being able to tell her also that the means of liquidating the debt were to be forthcoming.

And now I must say a word about Lucy Robarts. If one might only go on without those descriptions, how pleasant it would all be! But Lucy Robarts has to play a forward part in this little drama, and those who care for such matters must be made to understand something of her form and likeness. When last we mentioned her as appearing, though not in any prominent position, at her brother's wedding, she was not quite sixteen; but now, at the time of her father's death, three years having since elapsed, she was nearly nineteen. Laying aside for the sake of clearness that indefinite term of girl,—for girls are girls from the age of three up to forty-three, if not previously married,—dropping that generic word, we may say that then, at that wedding of her brother, she was a child; and now, at the death of her father, she was a woman.

Nothing, perhaps, adds so much to womanhood, turns the child so quickly into a woman, as such death-bed scenes as these. Hitherto but little had fallen to Lucy to do in the way of woman's duties. Of money transactions she had known nothing, beyond a jocose attempt to make her annual allowance of twenty-five pounds cover all her personal wants,—an attempt which was made jocose by the loving bounty of her father. Her sister, who was three years her elder,—for John came in between them,—had managed the house; that is, she had made the tea and talked to the housekeeper about the dinners. But Lucy had sat at her father's elbow, had read to him of evenings when he went to sleep, had brought him his slippers and looked after the comforts of his easy-chair. All this she had done as a child; but when she stood at the coffin head, and knelt at the coffin side, then she was a woman.

She was smaller in stature than either of her three sisters, to all of whom had been acceded the praise of being fine women,—a eulogy which the people of Exeter, looking back at the elder sisters, and the general remembrance of them which pervaded the city, were not willing to extend to Lucy. "Dear,—dear!" had been said of her; "poor Lucy is not like a Robarts at all; is she now, Mrs. Pole?"—for as the daughters had become fine women, so had the sons grown into stalwart men. And then Mrs. Pole had answered: "Not a bit; is she now? Only think what Blanche was at her age. But she has fine eyes, for all that; and they do say she is the cleverest of them all." And that, too, is so true a description of her that I do not know that I can add much to it. She was not like

Blanche; for Blanche had a bright complexion, and a fine neck, and a noble bust, et vera incessu patuit Dea,—a true goddess, that is, as far as the eye went. She had a grand idea, moreover, of an apple-pie, and had not reigned eighteen months at Creamclotted Hall before she knew all the mysteries of pigs and milk, and most of those appertaining to cider and green geese.

Lucy had no neck at all worth speaking of,—no neck, I mean, that ever produced eloquence; she was brown, too, and had addicted herself in no wise, as she undoubtedly should have done, to larder utility. In regard to the neck and colour, poor girl, she could not help herself; but in that other respect she must be held as having wasted her opportunities. But then what eyes she had! Mrs. Pole was right there. They flashed upon you, not always softly; indeed, not often softly if you were a stranger to her; but whether softly or savagely, with a brilliancy that dazzled you as you looked at them. And who shall say of what colour they were? Green, probably, for most eyes are green; —green, or grey if green be thought uncomely for an eye-colour. But it was not their colour, but their fire, which struck one with such surprise.

Lucy Robarts was thoroughly a brunette. Sometimes the dark tint of her cheek was exquisitely rich and lovely, and the fringes of her eyes were long and soft, and her small teeth, which one so seldom saw, were white as pearls, and her hair, though short, was beautifully soft,—by no means black, but yet of so dark a shade of brown! Blanche, too, was noted for fine teeth. They were white and regular and lofty as a new row of houses in a French city. But then when she laughed she was all teeth;—and she was all neck

when she sat at the piano. But Lucy's teeth!—it was only now and again, when in some sudden burst of wonder she would sit for a moment with her lips apart, that the fine finished lines and dainty pearl-white colour of that perfect set of ivory could be seen. Mrs. Pole would have said a word of her teeth also, but that to her they had never been made visible. "But they do say that she is the cleverest of them all," Mrs. Pole had added, very properly. The people of Exeter had expressed such an opinion, and had been quite just in doing so. I do not know how it happens, but it always does happen, that everybody in every small town knows which is the brightest-witted in every family. In this respect Mrs. Pole had only expressed public opinion, and public opinion was right. Lucy Robarts was blessed with an intelligence keener than that of her brothers or sisters.

"To tell the truth, Mark, I admire Lucy more than I do Blanche." This had been said by Mrs. Robarts within a few hours of her having assumed that name. "She 's not a beauty, I know, but yet I do."

"My dearest Fanny!" Mark had answered in a tone of surprise.

"I do, then; of course people won't think so; but I never seem to care about regular beauties. Perhaps I envy them too much." What Mark said next need not be repeated, but everybody may be sure that it contained some gross flattery for his young bride. He remembered this, however, and had always called Lucy his wife's pet. Neither of the sisters had since that been at Framley; and though Fanny had spent a week at Exeter on the occasion of Blanche's marriage, it could hardly be said that she was very intimate with

them. Nevertheless, when it became expedient that one of them should go to Framley, the remembrance of what his wife had said immediately induced Mark to make the offer to Lucy; and Jane, who was of a kindred soul with Blanche, was delighted to go to Creamclotted Hall. The acres of Heavybed House, down in that fat Totnes country, adjoined those of Creamclotted Hall, and Heavybed House still wanted a mistress.

Fanny was delighted when the news reached her. It would of course be proper that one of his sisters should live with Mark under their present circumstances, and she was happy to think that that quiet little bright-eyed creature was to come and nestle with her under the same roof. The children should so love her,—only not quite so much as they loved mamma; and the snug little room that looks out over the porch, in which the chimney never smokes, should be made ready for her; and she should be allowed her share of driving the pony,—which was a great sacrifice of self on the part of Mrs. Robarts,—and Lady Lufton's best good-will should be bespoken. In fact, Lucy was not unfortunate in the destination that was laid out for her. Lady Lufton had of course heard of the doctor's death, and had sent all manner of kind messages to Mark, advising him not to hurry home by any means until everything was settled at Exeter. And then she was told of the new-comer that was expected in the parish. When she heard that it was Lucy, the younger, she also was satisfied; for Blanche's charms, though indisputable, had not been altogether to her taste. If a second Blanche were to arrive there, what danger might there not be for young Lord Lufton!

"Quite right," said her ladyship, "just what he ought to do. I think I remember the young lady; rather small, is she not, and very retiring?"

"Rather small and very retiring. What a description!" said Lord Lufton.

"Never mind, Ludovic. Some young ladies must be small, and some at least ought to be retiring. We shall be delighted to make her acquaintance."

"I remember your other sister-in-law very well," said Lord Lufton. "She was a beautiful woman."

"I don't think you will consider Lucy a beauty," said Mrs. Robarts.

"Small, retiring, and——" so far Lord Lufton had gone, when Mrs. Robarts finished by the word "plain." She had liked Lucy's face, but she had thought that others probably did not do so.

"Upon my word," said Lady Lufton, "you don't deserve to have a sister-in-law. I remember her very well, and can say that she is not plain. I was very much taken with her manner at your wedding, my dear, and thought more of her than I did of the beauty, I can tell you."

"I must confess I do not remember her at all," said his lordship. And so the conversation ended. And then at the end of the fortnight Mark arrived with his sister. They did not reach Framley till long after dark,—somewhere between six and seven,—and by this time it was December. There was snow on the ground, and frost in the air, and no moon, and cautious men when they went on the roads had their horses' shoes cocked. Such being the state of the weatner, Mark's gig had been nearly filled with cloaks and shawls when it was sent over to Silverbridge.

And a cart was sent for Lucy's luggage, and all manner of preparations had been made. Three times had Fanny gone herself to see that the fire burned brightly in the little room over the porch, and at the moment that the sound of the wheels was heard she was engaged in opening her son's mind as to the nature of an aunt. Hitherto papa and mamma and Lady Lufton were all that he had known, excepting, of course, the satellites of the nursery. And then in three minutes Lucy was standing by the fire. Those three minutes had been taken up in embraces between the husband and the wife. Let who would be brought as a visitor to the house, after a fortnight's absence, she would kiss him before she welcomed any one else. But then she turned to Lucy, and began to assist her with her cloaks.

"Oh, thank you," said Lucy; "I 'm not cold,—not very, at least. Don't trouble yourself; I can do it." But here she had made a false boast, for her fingers had been so numbed that she could neither do nor undo anything. They were all in black, of course; but the sombreness of Lucy's clothes struck Fanny much more than her own. They seemed to have swallowed her up in their blackness, and to have made her almost an emblem of death. She did not look up, but kept her face turned towards the fire, and seemed almost afraid of her position.

"She may say what she likes, Fanny," said Mark, "but she is very cold. And so am I,—cold enough. You had better go up with her to her room. We won't do much in the dressing way to-night; eh, Lucy?" In the bedroom Lucy thawed a little, and Fanny, as she kissed her, said to herself that she had

been wrong as to that word "plain." Lucy, at any rate, was not plain.

"You will be used to us soon," said Fanny, "and then I hope we shall make you comfortable." And she took her sister-in-law's hand and pressed it. Lucy looked up at her, and her eyes then were tender enough. "I am sure I shall be happy here," she said, "with you. But,—but,—dear papa!" And then they got into each other's arms, and had a great bout of kissing and crying. "Plain," said Fanny to herself, as at last she got her guest's hair smoothed and the tears washed from her eyes;—"plain! She has the loveliest countenance that I ever looked at in my life!"

"Your sister is quite beautiful," she said to Mark, as they talked her over alone before they went to sleep that night.

"No, she 's not beautiful; but she 's a very good girl, and clever enough too, in her sort of way."

"I think her perfectly lovely. I never saw such eyes in my life before."

"I 'll leave her in your hands, then; you shall get her a husband."

"That may n't be so easy. I don't think she 'd marry anybody."

"Well, I hope not. But she seems to me to be exactly cut out for an old maid;—to be aunt Lucy for ever and ever to your bairns."

"And so she shall, with all my heart. But I don't think she will, very long. I have no doubt she will be hard to please; but if I were a man I should fall in love with her at once. Did you ever observe her teeth, Mark?"

"I don't think I ever did."

"You would n't know whether any one had a tooth in their head, I believe."

"No one except you, my dear; and I know all yours by heart."

"You are a goose."

"And a very sleepy one; so, if you please, I 'll go to roost." And thus there was nothing more said about Lucy's beauty on that occasion.

For the first two days Mrs. Robarts did not make much of her sister-in-law. Lucy, indeed, was not demonstrative: and she was, moreover, one of those few persons,—for they are very few,—who are contented to go on with their existence, without making themselves the centre of any special outward circle. To the ordinary run of minds it is impossible not to do this. A man's own dinner is to himself so important that he cannot bring himself to believe that it is a matter utterly indifferent to every one else. A lady's collection of baby-clothes, in early years, and of house-linen and curtain-fringes in later life, is so very interesting to her own eyes, that she cannot believe but what other people will rejoice to behold it. I would not, however, be held as regarding this tendency as evil. It leads to conversation of some sort among people, and perhaps to a kind of sympathy. Mrs. Jones will look at Mrs. White's linen chest, hoping that Mrs. White may be induced to look at hers. One can only pour out of a jug that which is in it. For the most of us, if we do not talk of ourselves, or at any rate of the individual circles of which we are the centres, we can talk of nothing. I cannot hold with those who wish to put down the insignificant chatter of the world. As for myself, I am always happy to

look at Mrs. Jones's linen, and never omit an opportunity of giving her the details of my own dinners. But Lucy Robarts had not this gift. She had come there as a stranger into her sister-in-law's house, and at first seemed as though she would be contented in simply having her corner in the drawing-room and her place at the parlour-table. She did not seem to need the comforts of condolence and open-hearted talking. I do not mean to say that she was moody, that she did not answer when she was spoken to, or that she took no notice of the children; but she did not at once throw herself and all her hopes and sorrows into Fanny's heart, as Fanny would have had her do.

Mrs. Robarts herself was what we call demonstrative. When she was angry with Lady Lufton she showed it. And as since that time her love and admiration for Lady Lufton had increased, she showed that also. When she was in any way displeased with her husband, she could not hide it, even though she tried to do so, and fancied herself successful,—no more than she could hide her warm, constant, overflowing woman's love. She could not walk through a room hanging on her husband's arm without seeming to proclaim to every one there that she thought him the best man in it. She was demonstrative, and therefore she was the more disappointed in that Lucy did not rush at once with all her cares into her open heart. "She is so quiet," Fanny said to her husband.

"That 's her nature," said Mark. "She always was quiet as a child. While we were smashing everything, she would never crack a tea-cup."

"I wish she would break something now," said Fanny, "and then perhaps we should get to talk about

it." But she did not on this account give over loving her sister-in-law. She probably valued her the more, unconsciously, for not having those aptitudes with which she herself was endowed. And then after two days Lady Lufton called. Of course it may be supposed that Fanny had said a good deal to her new inmate about Lady Lufton. A neighbour of that kind in the country exercises so large an influence upon the whole tenor of one's life, that to abstain from such talk is out of the question. Mrs. Robarts had been brought up almost under the dowager's wing, and of course she regarded her as being worthy of much talking. Do not let persons on this account suppose that Mrs. Robarts was a tuft-hunter, or a toad-eater. If they do not see the difference they have yet got to study the earliest principles of human nature.

Lady Lufton called, and Lucy was struck dumb. Fanny was particularly anxious that her ladyship's first impression should be favourable, and to effect this, she especially endeavoured to throw the two together during that visit. But in this she was unwise. Lady Lufton, however, had woman-craft enough not to be led into any egregious error by Lucy's silence. "And what day will you come and dine with us?" said Lady Lufton, turning expressly to her old friend Fanny.

"Oh, do you name the day. We never have many engagements, you know."

"Will Thursday do, Miss Robarts? You will meet nobody you know; only my son; so you need not regard it as going out. Fanny here will tell you that stepping over to Framley Court is no more going out than when you go from one room to another in the parsonage. Is it, Fanny?" Fanny laughed, and said

that stepping over to Framley Court certainly was done so often that perhaps they did not think so much about it as they ought to do.

"We consider ourselves a sort of happy family here, Miss Robarts, and are delighted to have the opportunity of including you in the ménage." Lucy gave her ladyship one of her sweetest smiles, but what she said at that moment was inaudible. It was plain, however, that she could not bring herself even to go as far as Framley Court for her dinner just at present. "It was very kind of Lady Lufton," she said to Fanny; "but it was so very soon, and—and—and if they would only go without her, she would be so happy." But as the object was to go with her,—expressly to take her there,—the dinner was adjourned for a short time—*sine die*.

CHAPTER XI.

GRISELDA GRANTLY.

It was nearly a month after this that Lucy was first introduced to Lord Lufton, and then it was brought about only by accident. During that time Lady Lufton had been often at the parsonage, and had in a certain degree learned to know Lucy; but the stranger in the parish had never yet plucked up courage to accept one of the numerous invitations that had reached her. Mr. Robarts and his wife had frequently been at Framley Court, but the dreaded day of Lucy's initiation had not yet arrived. She had seen Lord Lufton in church, but hardly so as to know him, and beyond that she had not seen him at all. One day, however, —or rather, one evening, for it was already dusk,—he overtook her and Mrs. Robarts on the road walking towards the vicarage. He had his gun on his shoulder, three pointers were at his heels, and a gamekeeper followed a little in the rear.

"How are you, Mrs. Robarts?" he said, almost before he had overtaken them. "I have been chasing you along the road for the last half-mile. I never knew ladies walk so fast."

"We should be frozen if we were to dawdle about as you gentlemen do," and then she stopped and shook hands with him. She forgot at the moment that Lucy

and he had not met, and therefore she did not introduce them.

"Won't you make me known to your sister-in-law?" said he, taking off his hat, and bowing to Lucy. "I have never yet had the pleasure of meeting her, though we have been neighbours for a month and more." Fanny made her excuses and introduced them, and then they went on till they came to Framley Gate, Lord Lufton talking to them both, and Fanny answering for the two, and there they stopped for a moment.

"I am surprised to see you alone," Mrs. Robarts had just said; "I thought that Captain Culpepper was with you."

"The captain has left me for this one day. If you 'll whisper I 'll tell you where he has gone. I dare not speak it out loud, even to the woods."

"To what terrible place can he have taken himself? I 'll have no whisperings about such horrors."

"He has gone to,—to,—but you 'll promise not to tell my mother?"

"Not tell your mother! Well, now you have excited my curiosity! Where can he be?"

"Do you promise, then?"

"Oh, yes! I will promise, because I am sure Lady Lufton won't ask me as to Captain Culpepper's whereabouts. We won't tell; will we, Lucy?"

"He has gone to Gatherum Castle for a day's pheasant-shooting. Now, mind, you must not betray us. Her ladyship supposes that he is shut up in his room with a tooth-ache. We did not dare to mention the name to her." And then it appeared that Mrs. Robarts had some engagement which made it necessary that she should go up and see Lady Lufton,

whereas Lucy was intending to walk on to the parsonage alone.

"And I have promised to go to your husband," said Lord Lufton; "or rather to your husband's dog, Ponto. And I will do two other good things. I will carry a brace of pheasants with me, and protect Miss Robarts from the evil spirits of the Framley roads." And so Mrs. Robarts turned in at the gate, and Lucy and his lordship walked off together. Lord Lufton, though he had never before spoken to Miss Robarts, had already found out that she was by no means plain. Though he had hardly seen her except at church, he had already made himself certain that the owner of that face must be worth knowing, and was not sorry to have the present opportunity of speaking to her. "So you have an unknown damsel shut up in your castle," he had once said to Mrs. Robarts. "If she be kept a prisoner much longer, I shall find it my duty to come and release her by force of arms." He had been there twice with the object of seeing her, but on both occasions Lucy had managed to escape. Now we may say she was fairly caught, and Lord Lufton, taking a pair of pheasants from the gamekeeper, and swinging them over his shoulder, walked off with his prey. "You have been here a long time," he said, "without our having had the pleasure of seeing you."

"Yes, my lord," said Lucy. Lords had not been frequent among her acquaintance hitherto.

"I tell Mrs. Robarts that she has been confining you illegally, and that we shall release you by force or stratagem."

"I—I—I have had a great sorrow lately."

"Yes, Miss Robarts, I know you have; and I am

only joking, you know. But I do hope that now you will be able to come amongst us. My mother is so anxious that you should do so."

"I am sure she is very kind, and you also—my lord."

"I never knew my own father," said Lord Lufton, speaking gravely. "But I can well understand what a loss you have had." And then, after pausing a moment, he continued, "I remember Dr. Robarts well."

"Do you, indeed?" said Lucy, turning sharply towards him, and speaking now with some animation in her voice. Nobody had yet spoken to her about her father since she had been at Framley. It had been as though the subject were a forbidden one. And how frequently is this the case! When those we love are dead, our friends dread to mention them, though to us who are bereaved no subject would be so pleasant as their names. But we rarely understand how to treat our own sorrow or those of others.

There was once a people in some land,—and they may be still there for what I know,—who thought it sacrilegious to stay the course of a raging fire. If a house were being burned, burn it must, even though there were facilities for saving it. For who would dare to interfere with the course of the god? Our idea of sorrow is much the same. We think it wicked, or at any rate heartless, to put it out. If a man's wife be dead, he should go about lugubrious, with long face, for at least two years, or perhaps with full length for eighteen months, decreasing gradually during the other six. If he be a man who can quench his sorrow,—put out his fire, as it were,—in less time than that, let him at any rate not show his power!

"Yes, I remember him," continued Lord Lufton. "He came twice to Framley while I was a boy, consulting with my mother about Mark and myself,—whether the Eton floggings were not more efficacious than those at Harrow. He was very kind to me, foreboding all manner of good things on my behalf."

"He was very kind to every one," said Lucy.

"I should think he would have been,—a kind, good, genial man,—just the man to be adored by his own family."

"Exactly; and so he was. I do not remember that I ever heard an unkind word from him. There was not a harsh tone in his voice. And he was generous as the day." Lucy, we have said, was not generally demonstrative, but now, on this subject, and with this absolute stranger, she became almost eloquent.

"I do not wonder that you should feel his loss, Miss Robarts."

"Oh, I do feel it. Mark is the best of brothers, and as for Fanny, she is too kind and too good to me. But I had always been specially my father's friend. For the last year or two we had lived so much together!"

"He was an old man when he died, was he not?"

"Just seventy, my lord."

"Ah! then he was old. My mother is only fifty, and we sometimes call her the old woman. Do you think she looks older than that? We all say that she makes herself out to be so much more ancient than she need do."

"Lady Lufton does not dress young."

"That is it. She never has, in my memory. She always used to wear black when I first recollect her.

She has given that up now; but she is still very sombre; is she not?"

"I do not like ladies to dress very young, that is, ladies of—of——"

"Ladies of fifty, we will say?"

"Very well; ladies of fifty, if you like it."

"Then I am sure you will like my mother."

They had now turned up through the parsonage wicket, a little gate that opened into the garden at a point on the road nearer than the chief entrance. "I suppose I shall find Mark up at the house?" said he.

"I dare say you will, my lord."

"Well, I 'll go round this way, for my business is partly in the stable. You see I am quite at home here, though you never have seen me before. But, Miss Robarts, now that the ice is broken, I hope that we may be friends." He then put out his hand, and when she gave him hers he pressed it almost as an old friend might have done. And, indeed, Lucy had talked to him almost as though he were an old friend. For a minute or two she had forgotten that he was a lord and a stranger,—had forgotten also to be stiff and guarded as was her wont. Lord Lufton had spoken to her as though he had really cared to know her; and she, unconsciously, had been taken by the compliment. Lord Lufton, indeed, had not thought much about it, —excepting as thus, that he liked the glance of a pair of bright eyes, as most other young men do like it. But, on this occasion, the evening had been so dark that he had hardly seen Lucy's eyes at all.

"Well, Lucy, I hope you liked your companion," Mrs. Robarts said, as the three of them clustered round the drawing-room fire before dinner.

"Oh, yes; pretty well," said Lucy.

"That is not at all complimentary to his lordship."

"I did not mean to be complimentary, Fanny."

"Lucy is a great deal too matter-of-fact for compliments," said Mark.

"What I meant was, that I had no great opportunity for judging, seeing that I was only with Lord Lufton for about ten minutes."

"Ah! but there are girls here who would give their eyes for ten minutes of Lord Lufton to themselves. You do not know how he is valued. He has the character of being always able to make himself agreeable to ladies at half a minute's warning."

"Perhaps he had not the half-minute's warning in this case," said Lucy,—hypocrite that she was.

"Poor Lucy," said her brother; "he was coming up to see Ponto's shoulder, and I am afraid he was thinking more about the dog than you."

"Very likely," said Lucy; and then they went in to dinner. Lucy had been a hypocrite, for she had confessed to herself, while dressing, that Lord Lufton had been very pleasant. But then it is allowed to young ladies to be hypocrites when the subject under discussion is the character of a young gentleman.

Soon after that Lucy did dine at Framley Court. Captain Culpepper, in spite of his enormity with reference to Gatherum Castle, was still staying there, as was also a clergyman from the neighbourhood of Barchester, with his wife and daughter. This was Archdeacon Grantly, a gentleman whom we have mentioned before, and who was as well known in the diocese as the bishop himself,—and more thought about by many clergymen than even that illustrious prelate. Miss Grantly was a

young lady not much older than Lucy Robarts, and she also was quiet, and not given to much talking in open company. She was decidedly a beauty, but somewhat statuesque in her loveliness. Her forehead was high and white, but perhaps too like marble to gratify the taste of those who are fond of flesh and blood. Her eyes were large and exquisitely formed, but they seldom showed much emotion. She, indeed, was impassive herself, and betrayed but little of her feelings. Her nose was nearly Grecian, not coming absolutely in a straight line from her forehead, but doing so nearly enough to entitle it to be considered as classical. Her mouth, too, was very fine—artists, at least, said so, and connoisseurs in beauty; but to me she always seemed as though she wanted fulness of lip. But the exquisite symmetry of her cheek and chin and lower face no man could deny. Her hair was light, and being always dressed with considerable care, did not detract from her appearance; but it lacked that richness which gives such luxuriance to feminine loveliness. She was tall and slight, and very graceful in her movements; but there were those who thought that she wanted the ease and abandon of youth. They said that she was too composed and stiff for her age, and that she gave but little to society beyond the beauty of her form and face. There can be no doubt, however, that she was considered by most men and women to be the beauty of Barsetshire, and that gentlemen from neighbouring counties would come many miles through dirty roads on the mere hope of being able to dance with her. Whatever attractions she may have lacked, she had at any rate created for herself a great reputation. She had spent two months of the

last spring in London, and even there she had made a sensation; and people had said that Lord Dumbello, Lady Hartletop's eldest son, had been peculiarly struck with her.

It may be imagined that the archdeacon was proud of her, and so, indeed, was Mrs. Grantly,—more proud, perhaps, of her daughter's beauty, than so excellent a woman should have allowed herself to be of such an attribute. Griselda,—that was her name,—was now an only daughter. One sister she had had, but that sister had died. There were two brothers also left, one in the Church, and the other in the army. That was the extent of the archdeacon's family, and as the archdeacon was a very rich man,—he had been the only child of his father, who was bishop of Barchester for a great many years; and in those years it had been worth a man's while to be bishop of Barchester,—it was supposed that Miss Grantly would have a large fortune. Mrs. Grantly, however, had been heard to say that she was in no hurry to see her daughter established in the world;—ordinary young ladies are merely married, but those of real importance are established;—and this, if anything, added to the value of the prize. Mothers sometimes depreciate their wares by an undue solicitude to dispose of them. But to tell the truth openly and at once,—a virtue for which a novelist does not receive very much commendation,—Griselda Grantly was, to a certain extent, already given away. Not that she, Griselda, knew anything about it, or that the thrice happy gentleman had been made aware of his good fortune;—nor even had the archdeacon been told. But Mrs. Grantly and Lady Lufton had been closeted together more than once,

and terms had been signed and sealed between them. Not signed on parchment, and sealed with wax, as is the case with treaties made by kings and diplomats,—to be broken by the same; but signed with little words, and sealed with certain pressings of the hand,—a treaty which between two such contracting parties would be binding enough. And by the terms of this treaty Griselda Grantly was to become Lady Lufton. Lady Lufton had hitherto been fortunate in her matrimonial speculations. She had selected Sir George for her daughter, and Sir George, with the utmost good-nature, had fallen in with her views. She had selected Fanny Monsell for Mr. Robarts, and Fanny Monsell had not rebelled against her for a moment. There was a prestige of success about her doings, and she felt almost confident that her dear son Ludovic must fall in love with Griselda. As to the lady herself, nothing, Lady Lufton thought, could be much better than such a match for her son. Lady Lufton, I have said, was a good churchwoman, and the archdeacon was the very type of that branch of the church which she venerated. The Grantlys, too, were of a good family,—not noble, indeed; but in such matters Lady Lufton did not want everything. She was one of those persons who, in placing their hopes at a moderate pitch, may fairly trust to see them realised. She would fain that her son's wife should be handsome. This she wished for his sake, that he might be proud of his wife, and because men love to look on beauty. But she was afraid of vivacious beauty, of those soft, sparkling feminine charms which are spread out as lures for all the world, soft dimples, laughing eyes, luscious lips, conscious smiles, and easy whispers. What if her son

should bring her home a rattling, rapid-spoken, painted piece of Eve's flesh such as this? Would not the glory and joy of her life be over, even though such child of their first mother should have come forth to the present day ennobled by the blood of two dozen successive British peers?

And then, too, Griselda's money would not be useless. Lady Lufton, with all her high-flown ideas, was not an imprudent woman. She knew that her son had been extravagant, though she did not believe that he had been reckless; and she was well content to think that some balsam from the old bishop's coffers should be made to cure the slight wounds which his early imprudence might have inflicted on the carcase of the family property. And thus, in this way, and for these reasons, Griselda Grantly had been chosen out from all the world to be the future Lady Lufton. Lord Lufton had met Griselda more than once already;—had met her before these high contracting parties had come to any terms whatsoever, and had evidently admired her. Lord Dumbello had remained silent one whole evening in London with ineffable disgust, because Lord Lufton had been rather particular in his attentions; but then Lord Dumbello's muteness was his most eloquent mode of expression. Both Lady Hartletop and Mrs. Grantly, when they saw him, knew very well what he meant. But that match would not exactly have suited Mrs. Grantly's views. The Hartletop people were not in her line. They belonged altogether to another set, being connected, as we have heard before, with the Omnium interest—"those horrid Gatherum people," as Lady Lufton would say to her, raising her hands and eyebrows, and shaking her head.

Lady Lufton probably thought that they ate babies in pies during their midnight orgies at Gatherum Castle; and that widows were kept in cells, and occasionally put on racks for the amusement of the duke's guests.

When the Robarts's party entered the drawing-room the Grantlys were already there, and the archdeacon's voice sounded loud and imposing in Lucy's ears, as she heard him speaking while she was yet on the threshold of the door. "My dear Lady Lufton, I would believe anything on earth about her,—anything. There is nothing too outrageous for her. Had she insisted on going there with the bishop's apron on, I should not have been surprised." And then they all knew that the archdeacon was talking about Mrs. Proudie, for Mrs. Proudie was his bugbear.

Lady Lufton after receiving her guests introduced Lucy to Griselda Grantly. Miss Grantly smiled graciously, bowed slightly, and then remarked in the lowest voice possible that it was exceedingly cold. A low voice, we know, is an excellent thing in woman. Lucy, who thought that she was bound to speak, said that it was cold, but that she did not mind it when she was walking. And then Griselda smiled again, somewhat less graciously than before, and so the conversation ended. Miss Grantly was the elder of the two, and having seen most of the world, should have been the best able to talk; but perhaps she was not very anxious for a conversation with Miss Robarts.

"So, Robarts, I hear that you have been preaching at Chaldicotes," said the archdeacon, still rather loudly. "I saw Sowerby the other day, and he told me that you gave them the fag-end of Mrs. Proudie's lecture."

"It was ill-natured of Sowerby to say the fag-end,"

said Robarts. "We divided the matter into thirds. Harold Smith took the first part, I the last."

"And the lady the intervening portion. You have electrified the county between you; but I am told she had the best of it."

"I was so sorry that Mr. Robarts went there," said Lady Lufton, as she walked into the dining-room leaning on the archdeacon's arm.

"I am inclined to think he could not very well have helped himself," said the archdeacon, who was never willing to lean heavily on a brother parson, unless on one who had utterly and irrevocably gone away from his side of the church.

"Do you think not, archdeacon?"

"Why, no; Sowerby is a friend of Lufton's."

"Not particularly," said poor Lady Lufton, in a deprecating tone.

"Well, they have been intimate; and Robarts, when he was asked to preach at Chaldicotes, could not well refuse."

"But then he went afterwards to Gatherum Castle. Not that I am vexed with him at all now, you understand. But it is such a dangerous house, you know."

"So it is.—But the very fact of the duke's wishing to have a clergyman there should always be taken as a sign of grace, Lady Lufton. The air was impure, no doubt; but it was less impure with Robarts there than it would have been without him. But, gracious heavens! what blasphemy have I been saying about impure air? Why, the bishop was there!"

"Yes, the bishop was there," said Lady Lufton, and they both understood each other thoroughly.

Lord Lufton took out Mrs. Grantly to dinner, and matters were so managed that Miss Grantly sat on the other side of him. There was no management apparent in this to anybody; but there she was, while Lucy was placed between her brother and Captain Culpepper. Captain Culpepper was a man of an enormous moustache, and a great aptitude for slaughtering game; but as he had no other strong characteristics it was not probable that he would make himself very agreeable to poor Lucy. She had seen Lord Lufton once, for two minutes, since the day of that walk, and then he had addressed her quite like an old friend. It had been in the parsonage drawing-room, and Fanny had been there. Fanny now was so well accustomed to his lordship, that she thought but little of this, but to Lucy it had been very pleasant. He was not forward or familiar, but kind and gentle, and pleasant; and Lucy did feel that she liked him. Now, on this evening, he had hitherto hardly spoken to her; but then she knew that there were other people in the company to whom he was bound to speak. She was not exactly humble-minded in the usual sense of the word; but she did recognise the fact that her position was less important than that of other people there, and that therefore it was probable that to a certain extent she would be overlooked. But not the less would she have liked to occupy the seat to which Miss Grantly had found her way. She did not want to flirt with Lord Lufton; she was not such a fool as that; but she would have liked to have heard the sound of his voice close to her ear, instead of that of Captain Culpepper's knife and fork. This was the first occasion on which she had endeavoured to dress herself with care since

her father had died; and now, sombre though she was in her deep mourning, she did look very well.

"There is an expression about her forehead that is full of poetry," Fanny had said to her husband.

"Don't you turn her head, Fanny, and make her believe that she is a beauty," Mark had answered.

"I doubt it is not so easy to turn her head, Mark. There is more in Lucy than you imagine, and so you will find out before long." It was thus that Mrs. Robarts prophesied about her sister-in-law. Had she been asked she might perhaps have said that Lucy's presence would be dangerous to the Grantly interest at Framley Court.

Lord Lufton's voice was audible enough as he went on talking to Miss Grantly,—his voice, but not his words. He talked in such a way that there was no appearance of whispering, and yet the person to whom he spoke, and she only, could hear what he said. Mrs. Grantly the while conversed constantly with Lucy's brother, who sat at Lucy's left hand. She never lacked for subjects on which to speak to a country clergyman of the right sort, and thus Griselda was left quite uninterrupted. But Lucy could not but observe that Griselda herself seemed to have very little to say,—or at any rate to say very little. Every now and then she did open her mouth, and some word or brace of words would fall from it. But for the most part she seemed to be content in the fact that Lord Lufton was paying her attention. She showed no animation, but sat there still and graceful, composed and classical, as she always was. Lucy, who could not keep her ears from listening or her eyes from looking, thought that had she been there she would have endeavoured to take a

more prominent part in the conversation. But then Griselda Grantly probably knew much better than Lucy did how to comport herself in such a situation. Perhaps it might be that young men such as Lord Lufton liked to hear the sound of their own voices.

"Immense deal of game about here," Captain Culpepper said to her towards the end of the dinner. It was the second attempt he had made. On the former he had asked her whether she knew any of the fellows of the 9th.

"Is there?" said Lucy. "Oh! I saw Lord Lufton the other day with a great armful of pheasants."

"An armful! Why, we had seven cartloads the other day at Gatherum."

"Seven carts full of pheasants!" said Lucy, amazed.

"That 's not so much. We had eight guns, you know. Eight guns will do a deal of work when the game has been well got together. They manage all that capitally at Gatherum. Been at the duke's, eh?" Lucy had heard the Framley report as to Gatherum Castle, and said with a sort of shudder that she had never been at that place. After this, Captain Culpepper troubled her no further.

When the ladies had taken themselves to the drawing-room Lucy found herself hardly better off than she had been at the dinner-table. Lady Lufton and Mrs. Grantly got themselves on to a sofa together, and there chatted confidentially into each other's ears. Her ladyship had introduced Lucy and Miss Grantly, and then she naturally thought that the young people might do very well together. Mrs. Robarts did attempt to bring about a joint conversation, which should include the three, and for five minutes or so she worked

hard at it. But it did not thrive. Miss Grantly was monosyllabic, smiling, however, at every monosyllable; and Lucy found that nothing would occur to her at that moment worthy of being spoken. There she sat, still and motionless, afraid to take up a book, and thinking in her heart how much happier she would have been at home at the parsonage. She was not made for society; she felt sure of that. Another time she would let Mark and Fanny come to Framley Court by themselves. And then the gentlemen came in, and there was another stir in the room. Lady Lufton got up and bustled about; she poked the fire and shifted the candles, spoke a few words to Dr. Grantly, whispered something to her son, patted Lucy on the cheek, told Fanny, who was a musician, that they would have a little music, and ended by putting her two hands on Griselda's shoulders and telling her that the fit of her frock was perfect. For Lady Lufton, though she did dress old herself, as Lucy had said, delighted to see those around her neat and pretty, jaunty and graceful.

"Dear Lady Lufton!" said Griselda, putting up her hand so as to press the end of her ladyship's fingers. It was the first piece of animation she had shown, and Lucy Robarts watched it all. And then there was music. Lucy neither played nor sang; Fanny did both, and for an amateur did both well. Griselda did not sing, but she played; and did so in a manner that showed that neither her own labour nor her father's money had been spared in her instruction. Lord Lufton sang also, a little, and Captain Culpepper a very little. So that they got up a concert among them. In the meantime the doctor and Mark stood talking together on the rug before the fire; the two mothers

sat contented, watching the billings and the cooings of their offspring;—and Lucy sat alone, turning over the leaves of a book of pictures. She had made up her mind fully, then and there, that she was quite unfitted by disposition for such work as this. She cared for no one, and no one cared for her. Well, she must go through with it now; but another time she would know better. With her own book and a fireside she never felt herself to be miserable as she was now. She had turned her back to the music, for she was sick of seeing Lord Lufton watch the artistic motion of Miss Grantly's fingers, and was sitting at a small table as far away from the piano as a long room would permit, when she was suddenly roused from a reverie of self-reproach by a voice close behind her: "Miss Robarts," said the voice, "why have you cut us all?" Lucy felt that, though she heard the words plainly, nobody else did. Lord Lufton was now speaking to her as he had before spoken to Miss Grantly.

"I don't play, my lord," said Lucy, "nor yet sing."

"That would have made your company so much more valuable to us, for we are terribly badly off for listeners. Perhaps you don't like music?"

"I do like it,—sometimes very much."

"And when are the sometimes? But we shall find it all out in time. We shall have unravelled all your mysteries, and read all your riddles by,—when shall I say?—by the end of the winter. Shall we not?"

"I do not know that I have got any mysteries."

"Oh, but you have! It is very mysterious in you to come and sit here—with your back to us all——"

"Oh, Lord Lufton; if I have done wrong——!"

and poor Lucy almost started from her chair, and a deep flush came across her dark cheek.

"No;—no; you have done no wrong. I was only joking. It is we who have done wrong in leaving you to yourself,—you who are the greatest stranger among us."

"I have been very well, thank you. I don't care about being left alone. I have always been used to it."

"Ah! but we must break you of the habit. We won't allow you to make a hermit of yourself. But the truth is, Miss Robarts, you don't know us yet, and therefore you are not quite happy among us."

"Oh! yes, I am; you are all very good to me."

"You must let us be good to you. At any rate, you must let me be so. You know, don't you, that Mark and I have been dear friends since we were seven years old. His wife had been my sister's dearest friend almost as long; and now that you are with them, you must be a dear friend too. You won't refuse the offer, will you?"

"Oh, no," she said, quite in a whisper; and, indeed, she could hardly raise her voice above a whisper, fearing that tears would fall from her tell-tale eyes.

"Dr. and Mrs. Grantly will have gone in a couple of days, and then we must get you down here. Miss Grantly is to remain for Christmas, and you two must become bosom friends." Lucy smiled, and tried to look pleased, but she felt that she and Griselda Grantly could never be bosom friends,—could never have anything in common between them. She felt sure that Griselda despised her,—little, brown, plain, and unimportant as she was. She herself could not despise

Griselda in turn; indeed, she could not but admire Miss Grantly's great beauty and dignity of demeanour; but she knew that she could never love her. It is hardly possible that the proud-hearted should love those who despise them; and Lucy Robarts was very proud-hearted.

"Don't you think she is very handsome?" said Lord Lufton.

"Oh, very," said Lucy. "Nobody can doubt that."

"Ludovic," said Lady Lufton,—not quite approving of her son's remaining so long at the back of Lucy's chair,—"won't you give us another song? Mrs. Robarts and Miss Grantly are still at the piano."

"I have sung away all that I knew, mother. There 's Culpepper has not had a chance yet. He has got to give us his dream,—how he 'dreamt that he dwelt in marble halls!'"

"I sang that an hour ago," said the captain, not over pleased.

"But you certainly have not told us how 'your little lovers came!'" The captain, however, would not sing any more. And then the party was broken up, and the Robartses went home to their parsonage.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LITTLE BILL.

Lucy, during those last fifteen minutes of her sojourn in the Framley Court drawing-room, somewhat modified the very strong opinion she had before formed as to her unfitness for such society. It was very pleasant sitting there in that easy-chair, while Lord Lufton stood at the back of it saying nice, soft, good-natured words to her. She was sure that in a little time she could feel a true friendship for him, and that she could do so without any risk of falling in love with him. But then she had a glimmering of an idea that such a friendship would be open to all manner of remarks, and would hardly be compatible with the world's ordinary ways. At any rate, it would be pleasant to be at Framley Court if he would come and occasionally notice her. She did not admit to herself that such a visit would be intolerable if his whole time were devoted to Griselda Grantly. She neither admitted it nor thought it; but nevertheless, in a strange, unconscious way, such a feeling did find entrance in her bosom. And then the Christmas holidays passed away. How much of this enjoyment fell to her share, and how much of this suffering she endured, we will not attempt accurately to describe. Miss Grantly remained at Framley Court up to Twelfth Night, and the Robartses also spent most of the season at the house. Lady Lufton, no doubt, had hoped that

everything might have been arranged on this occasion in accordance with her wishes, but such had not been the case. Lord Lufton had evidently admired Miss Grantly very much; indeed, he had said so to his mother half-a-dozen times; but it may almost be questioned whether the pleasure Lady Lufton derived from this was not more than neutralized by an opinion he once put forward that Griselda Grantly wanted some of the fire of Lucy Robarts.

"Surely, Ludovic, you would never compare the two girls," said Lady Lufton.

"Of course not. They are the very antipodes to each other. Miss Grantly would probably be more to my taste;—but then I am wise enough to know that it is so because my taste is a bad taste."

"I know no man with a more accurate or refined taste in such matters," said Lady Lufton. Beyond this she did not dare to go. She knew very well that her strategy would be vain should her son once learn that she had a strategy. To tell the truth, Lady Lufton was becoming somewhat indifferent to Lucy Robarts. She had been very kind to the little girl; but the little girl seemed hardly to appreciate the kindness as she should do. And then Lord Lufton would talk to Lucy, "which was so unnecessary, you know;" and Lucy had got into a way of talking quite freely with Lord Lufton, having completely dropped that short, spasmodic, ugly exclamation of "my lord." And so the Christmas festivities were at an end, and January wore itself away. During the greater part of this month Lord Lufton did not remain at Framley, but was nevertheless in the county, hunting with the hounds of both divisions, and staying at various houses.

Two or three nights he spent at Chaldicotes; and one, —let it only be told in an under voice,—at Gatherum Castle! Of this he said nothing to Lady Lufton. "Why make her unhappy?" as he said to Mark. But Lady Lufton knew it, though she said not a word to him;—knew it, and was unhappy. "If he would only marry Griselda, there would be an end of that danger," she said to herself.

But now we must go back for a while to the vicar and his little bill. It will be remembered that his first idea with reference to that trouble, after the reading of his father's will, was to borrow the money from his brother John. John was down at Exeter at the time, and was to stay one night at the parsonage on his way to London. Mark would broach the matter to him on the journey, painful though it would be to him to tell the story of his own folly to a brother so much younger than himself, and who had always looked up to him, clergyman and full-blown vicar as he was, with a deference greater than that which such difference in age required. The story was told, however; but was told all in vain, as Mark found out before he reached Framley. His brother John immediately declared that he would lend him the money, of course;—eight hundred if his brother wanted it. He, John, confessed that, as regarded the remaining two, he should like to feel the pleasure of immediate possession. As for interest, he would not take any. Take interest from a brother! of course not. Well, if Mark made such a fuss about it, he supposed he must take it; but would rather not. Mark should have his own way, and do just what he liked.

This was all very well, and Mark had fully made up

his mind that his brother should not be kept long out of his money. But then arose the question, how was that money to be reached? He, Mark, was executor, or one of the executors under his father's will, and, therefore, no doubt, could put his hand upon it; but his brother wanted five months of being of age, and could not therefore as yet be put legally in possession of the legacy. "That 's a bore," said the assistant private secretary to the Lord Petty Bag, thinking, perhaps, as much of his own immediate wish for ready cash as he did of his brother's necessities. Mark felt that it was a bore, but there was nothing more to be done in that direction. He must now find out how far the bankers could assist him.

Some week or two after his return to Framley he went over to Barchester, and called there on a certain Mr. Forrest, the manager of one of the banks, with whom he was acquainted; and with many injunctions as to secrecy told this manager the whole of his story. At first he concealed the name of his friend Sowerby, but it soon appeared that no such concealment was of any avail. "That 's Sowerby, of course," said Mr. Forrest. "I know you are intimate with him; and all his friends go through that, sooner or later." It seemed to Mark as though Mr. Forrest made very light of the whole transaction.

"I cannot possibly pay the bill when it falls due," said Mark.

"Oh, no, of course not," said Mr. Forrest. "It 's never very convenient to hand out four hundred pounds at a blow. Nobody will expect you to pay it!"

"But I suppose I shall have to do it sooner or later?"

"Well; that 's as may be. It will depend partly on how you manage with Sowerby, and partly on the hands it gets into. As the bill has your name on it, they 'll have patience as long as the interest is paid, and the commissions on renewal. But no doubt it will have to be met some day by somebody." Mr. Forrest said that he was sure that the bill was not in Barchester. Mr. Sowerby would not, he thought, have brought it to a Bachester bank. The bill was probably in London, but doubtless would be sent to Barchester for collection. "If it comes in my way," said Mr. Forrest, "I will give you plenty of time, so that you may manage about the renewal with Sowerby. I suppose he 'll pay the expense of doing that."

Mark's heart was somewhat lighter as he left the bank. Mr. Forrest had made so little of the whole transaction that he felt himself justified in making little of it also. "It may be as well," said he to himself, as he drove home, "not to tell Fanny anything about it till the three months have run round. I must make some arrangement then." And in this way his mind was easier during the last of those three months than it had been during the two former. That feeling of over-due bills, of bills coming due, of accounts overdrawn, of tradesmen unpaid, of general money cares, is very dreadful at first; but it is astonishing how soon men get used to it. A load which would crush a man at first becomes, by habit, not only endurable, but easy and comfortable to the bearer. The habitual debtor goes along jaunty and with elastic step, almost enjoying the excitement of his embarrassments. There was Mr. Sowerby himself;—who ever saw a cloud on his brow? It made one almost in love with ruin to be in

his company. And even now, already, Mark Robarts was thinking to himself quite comfortably about this bill. How very pleasantly those bankers managed these things! Pay it! No; no one would be so unreasonable as to expect you to do that! And then Mr. Sowerby certainly was a pleasant fellow, and gave a man something in return for his money. It was still a question with Mark whether Lord Lufton had not been too hard on Sowerby.

One is almost inclined to believe that there is something pleasurable in the excitement of such embarrassments, as there is also in the excitement of drink. But then, at last, the time does come when the excitement is over, and when nothing but the misery is left. If there be an existence of wretchedness on earth it must be that of the elderly, worn-out roué, who has run this race of debt and bills of accommodation and acceptances,—of what, if we were not in these days somewhat afraid of good broad English, we might call lying and swindling, falsehood and fraud,—and who, having ruined all whom he should have loved, having burnt up every one who would trust him much, and scorched all who would trust him a little, is at last left to finish his life with such bread and water as these men get, without one honest thought to strengthen his sinking heart, or one honest friend to hold his shivering hand! If a man could only think of that, as he puts his name to the first little bill, as to which he is so good-naturedly assured that it can easily be renewed!

When the three months had nearly run out, it so happened that Robarts met his friend Sowerby. Mark had once or twice ridden with Lord Lufton as far as the meet of the hounds, and may, perhaps, have gone

a field or two farther on some occasions. The reader must not think that he had taken to hunting, as some parsons do. And it is singular enough that whenever they do so they always show a special aptitude for the pursuit, as though hunting were an employment peculiarly congenial with a cure of souls in the country. Such a thought would do our vicar injustice. But when Lord Lufton would ask him what on earth could be the harm of riding along the roads to look at the hounds, he hardly knew what sensible answer to give his lordship. It would be absurd to say that his time would be better employed at home in clerical matters, for it was notorious that he had not clerical pursuits for the employment of half his time. In this way, therefore, he had got into the habit of looking at the hounds, and keeping up his acquaintance in the county, meeting Lord Dumbello, Mr. Green Walker, Harold Smith, and other such-like sinners; and on one such occasion, as the three months were nearly closing, he did meet Mr. Sowerby. "Look here, Sowerby; I want to speak to you for half a moment. What are you going to do about that bill?"

"Bill,—bill! what bill?—which bill? The whole bill, and nothing but the bill. That seems to be the conversation now-a-days of all men, morning, noon, and night!"

"Don't you know the bill I signed for you for four hundred pounds?"

"Did you, though? Was not that rather green of you?" This did seem strange to Mark. Could it really be the fact that Mr. Sowerby had so many bills flying about that he had absolutely forgotten that occurrence in the Gatherum Castle bedroom? And then

to be called green by the very man whom he had obliged!

"Perhaps I was," said Mark, in a tone that showed that he was somewhat piqued. "But all the same I should be glad to know how it will be taken up."

"Oh, Mark, what a ruffian you are to spoil my day's sport in this way. Any man but a parson would be too good a Christian for such intense cruelty. But let me see;—four hundred pounds? Oh, yes;—Tozer has it."

"And what will Tozer do with it?"

"Make money of it; whatever way he may go to work he will do that."

"But will Tozer bring it to me on the 20th?"

"Oh, Lord, no! Upon my word, Mark, you are deliciously green. A cat would as soon think of killing a mouse directly she got it into her claws. But, joking apart, you need not trouble yourself. Maybe you will hear no more about it;—or, perhaps, which no doubt is more probable, I may have to send it to you to be renewed. But you need do nothing till you hear from me or somebody else."

"Only do not let any one come down upon me for the money."

"There is not the slightest fear of that. Tally-ho, old fellow! He 's away! Tally-ho! right over by Gossetts' barn. Come along, and never mind Tozer;—'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'" And away they both went together, parson and member of Parliament. And then again on that occasion Mark went home with a sort of feeling that the bill did not matter. Tozer would manage it somehow; and it was quite clear that it would not do to tell his wife of it just at present.

On the 21st of that month of February, however, he did receive a reminder that the bill and all concerning it had not merely been a farce. This was a letter from Mr. Sowerby, dated from Chaldicotes, though not bearing the Barchester post-mark, in which that gentleman suggested a renewal,—not exactly of the old bill, but of a new one. It seemed to Mark that the letter had been posted in London. If I give it entire, I shall, perhaps, most quickly explain its purport:

"Chaldicotes, 20th February, 185—.

"My dear Mark,—'Lend not thy name to the money-dealers, for the same is a destruction and a snare.' If that be not in the Proverbs, it ought to be. Tozer has given me certain signs of his being alive and strong this cold weather. As we can neither of us take up that bill for 400*l.* at the moment, we must renew it, and pay him his commission and interest, with all the rest of his perquisites, and pickings, and stealings,—from all which, I can assure you, Tozer does not keep his hands as he should do. To cover this and some other little outstanding trifles, I have filled in a new bill for 500*l.*, making it due 23d of May next. Before that time a certain accident will, I trust, have occurred to your impoverished friend. By-the-bye, I never told you how she went off from Gatherum Castle, the morning after you left us, with the Greshams. Cart-ropes would not hold her, even though the duke held them; which he did, with all the strength of his ducal hands. She would go to meet some doctor of theirs, and so I was put off for that time; but I think that the matter stands in a good train.

"Do not lose a post in sending back the bill ac-

cepted, as Tozer may annoy you;—nay, undoubtedly will, if the matter be not in his hand, duly signed by both of us, the day after to-morrow. He is an ungrateful brute; he has lived on me for these eight years, and would not let me off a single squeeze now to save my life. But I am specially anxious to save you from the annoyance and cost of lawyers' letters; and if delayed, it might get into the papers. Put it under cover to me, at No. 7 Duke Street, St. James's. I shall be in town by that time.

"Good-bye, old fellow. That was a decent brush we had the other day from Cobbold's Ashes. I wish I could get that brown horse from you. I would not mind going to a hundred and thirty.

"Yours ever,

"N. SOWERBY."

When Mark had read it through he looked down on his table to see whether the old bill had fallen from the letter; but no, there was no enclosure, and had been no enclosure but the new bill. And then he read the letter through again, and found that there was no word about the old bill;—not a syllable, at least, as to its whereabouts. Sowerby did not even say that it would remain in his own hands. Mark did not, in truth, know much about such things. It might be that the very fact of his signing this second document would render that first document null and void; and from Sowerby's silence on the subject, it might be argued that this was so well known to be the case, that he had not thought of explaining it. But yet Mark could not see how this should be so. But what was he to do? That threat of cost and lawyers, and especially of the

newspapers, did have its effect upon him;—as no doubt it was intended to do. And then he was utterly dumfounded by Sowerby's impudence in drawing on him for 500*l.* instead of 400*l.*, "covering," as Sowerby so good-humouredly said, "sundry little outstanding trifles."

But at last he did sign the bill, and sent it off, as Sowerby had directed. What else was he to do? Fool that he was! A man always can do right, even though he has done wrong before. But that previous wrong adds so much difficulty to the path,—a difficulty which increases in tremendous ratio, till a man at last is choked in his struggling, and is drowned beneath the waters. And then he put away Sowerby's letter carefully, locking it up from his wife's sight. It was a letter that no parish clergyman should have received. So much he acknowledged to himself. But nevertheless it was necessary that he should keep it. And now again for a few hours this affair made him very miserable.

CHAPTER XIII.

DELICATE HINTS.

Lady Lufton had been greatly rejoiced at that good deed which her son did in giving up his Leicestershire hunting, and coming to reside for the winter at Framley. It was proper, and becoming, and comfortable in the extreme. An English nobleman ought to hunt in the county where he himself owns the fields over which he rides; he ought to receive the respect and honour due to him from his own tenants; he ought to sleep under a roof of his own, and he ought also,—so Lady Lufton thought,—to fall in love with a young embryo bride of his own mother's choosing. And then it was so pleasant to have him there in the house. Lady Lufton was not a woman who allowed her life to be what people in common parlance call dull. She had too many duties, and thought too much of them, to allow of her suffering from tedium and ennui. But nevertheless the house was more joyous to her when he was there. There was a reason for some little gaiety, which would never have been attracted thither by herself, but which, nevertheless, she did enjoy when it was brought about by his presence. She was younger and brighter when he was there, thinking more of the future and less of the past. She could

look at him, and that alone was happiness to her. And then he was pleasant-mannered with her; joking with her on her little old-world prejudices in a tone that was musical to her ear as coming from him; smiling on her, reminding her of those smiles which she had loved so dearly when as yet he was all her own, lying there in his little bed beside her chair. He was kind and gracious to her, behaving like a good son, at any rate while he was there in her presence. When we add to this her fears that he might not be so perfect in his conduct when absent, we may well imagine that Lady Lufton was pleased to have him there at Framley Court.

She had hardly said a word to him as to that five thousand pounds. Many a night, as she lay thinking on her pillow, she said to herself that no money had ever been better expended, since it had brought him back to his own house. He had thanked her for it in his own open way, declaring that he would pay it back to her during the coming year, and comforting her heart by his rejoicing that the property had not been sold. "I don't like the idea of parting with an acre of it," he had said.

"Of course not, Ludovic. Never let the estate decrease in your hands. It is only by such resolutions as that that English noblemen and English gentlemen can preserve their country. I cannot bear to see property changing hands."

"Well, I suppose it 's a good thing to have land in the market sometimes, so that the millionaires may know what to do with their money."

"God forbid that yours should be there!" And the widow made a little mental prayer that her son's

acres might be protected from the millionaires and other Philistines.

"Why, yes; I don't exactly want to see a Jew tailor investing his earnings at Lufton," said the lord.

"Heaven forbid!" said the widow. All this, as I have said, was very nice. It was manifest to her ladyship, from his lordship's way of talking, that no vital injury had as yet been done; he had no cares on his mind, and spoke freely about the property; but nevertheless there were clouds even now, at this period of bliss, which somewhat obscured the brilliancy of Lady Lufton's sky. Why was Ludovic so slow in that affair of Griselda Grantly? Why so often in these latter winter days did he saunter over to the parsonage? And then that terrible visit to Gatherum Castle! What actually did happen at Gatherum Castle she never knew. We, however, are more intrusive, less delicate in our inquiries, and we can say. He had a very bad day's sport with the West Barsetshire. The county is altogether short of foxes, and some one who understands the matter must take that point up before they can do any good. And after that he had had rather a dull dinner with the duke. Sowerby had been there, and in the evening he and Sowerby had played billiards. Sowerby had won a pound or two, and that had been the extent of the damage done. But those saunterings over to the parsonage might be more dangerous. Not that it ever occurred to Lady Lufton as possible that her son should fall in love with Lucy Robarts. Lucy's personal attractions were not of a nature to give ground for such a fear as that. But he might turn the girl's head with his chatter; she might be fool enough to fancy any folly; and, moreover,

people would talk. Why should he go to the parsonage now more frequently than he had ever done before Lucy came there?

And then her ladyship, in reference to the same trouble, hardly knew how to manage her invitations to the parsonage. These hitherto had been very frequent, and she had been in the habit of thinking that they could hardly be too much so; but now she was almost afraid to continue the custom. She could not ask the parson and his wife without Lucy; and when Lucy was there, her son would pass the greater part of the evening in talking to her, or playing chess with her. Now this did disturb Lady Lufton not a little. And then Lucy took it all so quietly. On her first arrival at Framley she had been so shy, so silent, and so much awe-struck by the grandeur of Framley Court, that Lady Lufton had sympathised with her and encouraged her. She had endeavoured to moderate the blaze of her own splendour, in order that Lucy's unaccustomed eyes might not be dazzled. But all this was changed now. Lucy could listen to the young lord's voice by the hour together,—without being dazzled in the least. Under these circumstances two things occurred to her. She would speak either to her son or to Fanny Robarts, and by a little diplomacy have this evil remedied. And then she had to determine on which step she would take. "Nothing could be more reasonable than Ludovic." So at least she said to herself over and over again. But then Ludovic understood nothing about such matters; and had, moreover, a habit, inherited from his father, of taking the bit between his teeth whenever he suspected interference. Drive him gently without pulling his mouth

about, and you might take him anywhere, almost at any pace; but a smart touch, let it be ever so slight, would bring him on his haunches, and then it might be a question whether you could get him another mile that day. So that on the whole Lady Lufton thought that the other plan would be the best. I have no doubt that Lady Lufton was right.

She got Fanny up into her own den one afternoon, and seated her discreetly in an easy arm-chair, making her guest take off her bonnet, and showing by various signs that the visit was regarded as one of great moment. "Fanny," she said, "I want to speak to you about something that is important and necessary to mention, and yet it is a very delicate affair to speak of." Fanny opened her eyes, and said that she hoped that nothing was wrong. "No, my dear, I think nothing is wrong. I hope so, and I think I may say I am sure of it; but then it 's always well to be on one's guard."

"Yes, it is," said Fanny, who knew that something unpleasant was coming,—something as to which she might probably be called upon to differ from her ladyship. Mrs. Robarts's own fears, however, were running entirely in the direction of her husband;—and, indeed, Lady Lufton had a word or two to say on that subject also, only not exactly now. A hunting parson was not at all to her taste; but that matter might be allowed to remain in abeyance for a few days.

"Now, Fanny, you know that we have all liked your sister-in-law, Lucy, very much." And then Mrs. Robarts's mind was immediately opened, and she knew the rest as well as though it had all been spoken. "I need hardly tell you that, for I am sure we have shown it."

"You have, indeed, as you always do."

"And you must not think that I am going to complain," continued Lady Lufton.

"I hope there is nothing to complain of," said Fanny, speaking by no means in a defiant tone, but humbly, as it were, and deprecating her ladyship's wrath. Fanny had gained one signal victory over Lady Lufton, and on that account, with a prudence equal to her generosity, felt that she could afford to be submissive. It might, perhaps, not be long before she would be equally anxious to conquer again.

"Well, no; I don't think there is," said Lady Lufton. "Nothing to complain of; but a little chat between you and me may, perhaps, set matters right, which otherwise might become troublesome."

"Is it about Lucy?"

"Yes, my dear,—about Lucy. She is a very nice, good girl, and a credit to her father——"

"And a great comfort to us," said Fanny.

"I am sure she is; she must be a very pleasant companion to you, and so useful about the children; but——" And then Lady Lufton paused for a moment; for she, eloquent and discreet as she always was, herself felt rather at a loss for words to express her exact meaning.

"I don't know what I should do without her," said Fanny, speaking with the object of assisting her ladyship in her embarrassment.

"But the truth is this; she and Lufton are getting into the way of being too much together,—of talking to each other too exclusively. I am sure you must have noticed it, Fanny. It is not that I suspect any evil. I don't think that I am suspicious by nature."

"Oh! no," said Fanny.

"But they will each of them get wrong ideas about the other, and about themselves. Lucy will, perhaps, think that Ludovic means more than he does, and Ludovic will——" But it was not quite so easy to say what Ludovic might do or think. But Lady Lufton went on: "I am sure that you understand me, Fanny, with your excellent sense and tact. Lucy is clever, and amusing, and all that; and Ludovic, like all young men, is perhaps ignorant that his attentions may be taken to mean more than he intends——"

"You don't think that Lucy is in love with him?"

"Oh dear, no;—nothing of the kind. If I thought it had come to that, I should recommend that she should be sent away altogether. I am sure she is not so foolish as that."

"I don't think there is anything in it at all, Lady Lufton."

"I don't think there is, my dear, and therefore I would not for worlds make any suggestion about it to Ludovic. I would not let him suppose that I suspected Lucy of being so imprudent. But still, it may be well that you should just say a word to her. A little management now and then, in such matters, is so useful."

"But what shall I say to her?"

"Just explain to her that any young lady who talks so much to the same young gentleman will certainly be observed;—that people will accuse her of setting her cap at Lord Lufton. Not that I suspect her. I give her credit for too much proper feeling. I know her education has been good, and her principles are upright. But people will talk of her. You must understand that, Fanny, as well as I do." Fanny could not help meditating whether proper feeling, education,

and upright principles did forbid Lucy Robarts to fall in love with Lord Lufton; but her doubts on this subject, if she held any, were not communicated to her ladyship. It had never entered into her mind that a match was possible between Lord Lufton and Lucy Robarts, nor had she the slightest wish to encourage it now that the idea was suggested to her. On such a matter she could sympathise with Lady Lufton, though she did not completely agree with her as to the expediency of any interference. Nevertheless, she at once offered to speak to Lucy. "I don't think that Lucy has any idea in her head upon the subject," said Mrs. Robarts.

"I dare say not;—I don't suppose she has. But young ladies sometimes allow themselves to fall in love, and then to think themselves very ill-used, just because they have had no idea in their head."

"I will put her on her guard if you wish it, Lady Lufton."

"Exactly, my dear; that is just it. Put her on her guard;—that is all that is necessary. She is a dear, good, clever girl, and it would be very sad if anything were to interrupt our comfortable way of getting on with her." Mrs. Robarts knew to a nicety the exact meaning of this threat. If Lucy would persist in securing to herself so much of Lord Lufton's time and attention, her visits to Framley Court must become less frequent. Lady Lufton would do much, very much, indeed, for her friends at the parsonage; but not even for them could she permit her son's prospects in life to be endangered. There was nothing more said between them, and Mrs. Robarts got up to take her leave, having promised to speak to Lucy.

C.R. GRANT.

"Lord Lufton wants me to learn to ride."

C.R.GRANT.

"*Lord Lufton wants me to learn to ride.*"

"You manage everything so perfectly," said Lady Lufton, as she pressed Mrs. Robarts's hand, "that I am quite at ease now that I find you agree with me." Mrs. Robarts did not exactly agree with her ladyship, but she hardly thought it worth her while to say so. Mrs. Robarts immediately started off on her walk to her own home, and when she had got out of the grounds into the road, where it makes a turn towards the parsonage, nearly opposite to Podgens's shop, she saw Lord Lufton on horseback, and Lucy standing beside him. It was already nearly five o'clock, and it was getting dusk; but as she approached, or rather as she came suddenly within sight of them, she could see that they were in close conversation. Lord Lufton's face was towards her, and his horse was standing still. He was leaning over towards his companion, and the whip, which he held in his right hand, hung almost over her arm and down her back, as though his hand had touched and perhaps rested on her shoulder. She was standing by his side, looking up into his face, with one gloved hand resting on the horse's neck. Mrs. Robarts, as she saw them, could not but own that there might be cause for Lady Lufton's fears. But then Lucy's manner, as Mrs. Robarts approached, was calculated to dissipate any such fears, and to prove that there was no ground for them. She did not move from her position, or allow her hand to drop, or show that she was in any way either confused or conscious. She stood her ground, and when her sister-in-law came up was smiling and at her ease. "Lord Lufton wants me to learn to ride," said she.

"To learn to ride!" said Fanny, not knowing what answer to make to such a proposition.

"Yes," said he. "This horse would carry her beautifully. He is as quiet as a lamb, and I made Gregory go out with him yesterday with a sheet hanging over him like a lady's habit, and the man got up into a lady's saddle."

"I think Gregory would make a better hand of it than Lucy."

"The horse cantered with him as though he had carried a lady all his life, and his mouth is like velvet; indeed, that is his fault;—he is too soft-mouthed."

"I suppose that 's the same sort of thing as a man being soft-hearted," said Lucy.

"Exactly; you ought to ride them both with a very light hand. They are difficult cattle to manage, but very pleasant when you know how to do it."

"But you see I don't know how to do it," said Lucy.

"As regards the horse, you will learn in two days, and I do hope you will try. Don't you think it will be an excellent thing for her, Mrs. Robarts?"

"Lucy has got no habit," said Mrs. Robarts, making use of the excuse common on all such occasions.

"There is one of Justinia's in the house, I know. She always leaves one here, in order that she may be able to ride when she comes."

"She would not think of taking such a liberty with Lady Meredith's things," said Fanny, almost frightened at the proposal.

"Of course it is out of the question, Fanny," said Lucy, now speaking rather seriously. "In the first place, I would not take Lord Lufton's horse; in the second place, I would not take Lady Meredith's habit; in the third place, I should be a great deal too much

frightened;—and, lastly, it is quite out of the question for a great many other very good reasons."

"Nonsense," said Lord Lufton.

"A great deal of nonsense," said Lucy, laughing, "but all of it of Lord Lufton's talking. But we are getting cold;—are we not, Fanny?—so we will wish you good-night." And then the two ladies shook hands with him, and walked on towards the parsonage. That which astonished Mrs. Robarts the most in all this was the perfectly collected manner in which Lucy spoke and conducted herself. This, connected, as she could not but connect it, with the air of chagrin with which Lord Lufton received Lucy's decision, made it manifest to Mrs. Robarts that Lord Lufton was annoyed because Lucy would not consent to learn to ride; whereas she, Lucy herself, had given her refusal in a firm and decided tone, as though resolved that nothing more should be said about it. They walked on in silence for a minute or two, till they reached the parsonage gate, and then Lucy said, laughing, "Can't you fancy me sitting on that great big horse? I wonder what Lady Lufton would say if she saw me there, and his lordship giving me my first lesson?"

"I don't think she would like it," said Fanny.

"I am sure she would not. But I will not try her temper in that respect. Sometimes I fancy that she does not even like seeing Lord Lufton talking to me."

"She does not like it, Lucy, when she sees him flirting with you." This Mrs. Robarts said rather gravely, whereas Lucy had been speaking in a half-bantering tone. As soon as even the word flirting was out of Fanny's mouth, she was conscious that she had been

guilty of an injustice in using it. She had wished to say something which would convey to her sister-in-law an idea of what Lady Lufton would dislike; but in doing so, she had unintentionally brought against her an accusation.

"Flirting, Fanny!" said Lucy, standing still in the path, and looking up into her companion's face with all her eyes. "Do you mean to say that I have been flirting with Lord Lufton?"

"I did not say that."

"Or that I have allowed him to flirt with me?"

"I did not mean to shock you, Lucy."

"What did you mean, Fanny?"

"Why, just this; that Lady Lufton would not be pleased if he paid you marked attentions, and if you received them; just like that affair of the riding; it was better to decline it."

"Of course I declined it. Of course I never dreamt of accepting such an offer. Go riding about the country on his horses! What have I done, Fanny, that you should suppose such a thing?"

"You have done nothing, dearest."

"Then why did you speak as you did just now?"

"Because I wished to put you on your guard. You know, Lucy, that I do not intend to find fault with you; but you may be sure, as a rule, that intimate friendships between young gentlemen and young ladies are dangerous things." They then walked up to the hall-door in silence. When they had reached it, Lucy stood in the doorway instead of entering it, and said, "Fanny, let us take another turn together, if you are not tired."

"No, I 'm not tired."

"It will be better that I should understand you at once,"—and then they again moved away from the house. "Tell me truly now, do you think that Lord Lufton and I have been flirting?"

"I do think that he is a little inclined to flirt with you."

"And Lady Lufton has been asking you to lecture me about it?" Poor Mrs. Robarts hardly knew what to say. She thought well of all the persons concerned, and was very anxious to behave well by all of them; —was particularly anxious to create no ill-feeling, and desirous that everybody should be comfortable, and on good terms with everybody else. But yet the truth was forced out of her when this question was asked so suddenly. "Not to lecture you, Lucy," she said at last.

"Well, to preach to me, or to talk to me, or to give me a lesson;—to say something that shall drive me to put my back up against Lord Lufton?"

"To caution you, dearest. Had you heard what she said, you would hardly have felt angry with Lady Lufton."

"Well, to caution me. It is such a pleasant thing for a girl to be cautioned against falling in love with a gentleman, especially when the gentleman is very rich, and a lord, and all that sort of thing!"

"Nobody for a moment attributes anything wrong to you, Lucy."

"Anything wrong;—no. I don't know whether it would be anything wrong, even if I were to fall in love with him. I wonder whether they cautioned Griselda Grantly when she was here? I suppose when young lords go about, all the girls are cautioned as a matter

of course. Why do they not label him 'dangerous'?" And then again they were silent for a moment, as Mrs. Robarts did not feel that she had anything further to say on the matter.

"'Poison' should be the word with any one so fatal as Lord Lufton. And he ought to be made up of some particular colour, for fear he should be swallowed in mistake."

"You will be safe, you see," said Fanny, laughing, "as you have been specially cautioned as to this individual bottle."

"Ah! but what 's the use of that after I have had so many doses? It is no good telling me about it now; when the mischief is done;—after I have been taking it for I don't know how long. Dear! dear! dear! And I regarded it as a mere commonplace powder, good for the complexion. I wonder whether it 's too late, or whether there 's any antidote?"

Mrs. Robarts did not always quite understand her sister-in-law, and now she was a little at a loss. "I don't think there 's much harm done yet on either side," she said, cheerily.

"Ah! you don't know, Fanny. But I do think that if I die,—as I shall; I feel I shall;—and if so, I do think it ought to go very hard with Lady Lufton. Why did n't she label him 'dangerous' in time?" And then they went into the house and up to their own rooms. It was difficult for any one to understand Lucy's state of mind at present, and it can hardly be said that she understood it herself. She felt that she had received a severe blow in having been thus made the subject of remark with reference to Lord Lufton. She knew that her pleasant evenings at Framley Court

were now over, and that she could not again talk to him in an unrestrained tone and without embarrassment. She had felt the air of the whole place to be very cold before her intimacy with him, and now it must be cold again. Two homes had been open to her; Framley Court and the parsonage; and now, as far as comfort was concerned, she must confine herself to the latter. She could not again be comfortable in Lady Lufton's drawing-room. But then she could not help asking herself whether Lady Lufton was not right. She had had courage enough, and presence of mind, to joke about the matter when her sister-in-law spoke to her, and yet she was quite aware that it was no joking matter. Lord Lufton had not absolutely made love to her, but he had latterly spoken to her in a manner which she knew was not compatible with that ordinary comfortable masculine friendship with the idea of which she had once satisfied herself. Was not Fanny right when she said that intimate friendships of that nature were dangerous things?

Yes, Lucy, very dangerous! Lucy, before she went to bed that night, had owned to herself that they were so; and lying there with sleepless eyes and a moist pillow, she was driven to confess that the label would in truth be now too late, that the caution had come to her after the poison had been swallowed. Was there any antidote? That was all that was left for her to consider. But, nevertheless, on the following morning she could appear quite at her ease. And when Mark had left the house after breakfast, she could still joke with Fanny as to Lady Lufton's poisoned cupboard.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. CRAWLEY OF HOGGLESTOCK.

And then there was that other trouble in Lady Lufton's mind, the sins, namely, of her selected parson. She had selected him, and she was by no means inclined to give him up, even though his sins against parsondom were grievous. Indeed, she was a woman not prone to give up anything, and of all things not prone to give up a protégé. The very fact that she herself had selected him was the strongest argument in his favour. But his sins against parsondom were becoming very grievous in her eyes, and she was at a loss to know what steps to take. She hardly dared to take him to task, him himself. Were she to do so, and should he then tell her to mind her own business,—as he probably might do, though not in those words,—there would be a schism in the parish; and almost anything would be better than that. The whole work of her life would be upset, all the outlets of her energy would be impeded if not absolutely closed, if a state of things were to come to pass in which she and the parson of her parish should not be on good terms.

But what was to be done? Early in the winter he had gone to Chaldicotes and to Gatherum Castle, consorting with gamblers, whigs, atheists, men of loose pleasure, and Proudieites. That she had condoned;

and now he was turning out a hunting parson on her hands. It was all very well for Fanny to say that he merely looked at the hounds as he rode about his parish. Fanny might be deceived. Being his wife, it might be her duty not to see her husband's iniquities. But Lady Lufton could not be deceived. She knew very well in what part of the county Cobbold's Ashes lay. It was not in Framley parish, nor in the next parish to it. It was half-way across to Chaldicotes,—in the western division; and she had heard of that run in which two horses had been killed, and in which parson Robarts had won such immortal glory among West Barsetshire sportsmen. It was not easy to keep Lady Lufton in the dark as to matters occurring in her own county.

All these things she knew, but as yet had not noticed, grieving over them in her own heart the more on that account. Spoken grief relieves itself; and when one can give counsel, one always hopes at least that that counsel will be effective. To her son she had said, more than once, that it was a pity that Mr. Robarts should follow the hounds.—"The world has agreed that it is unbecoming in a clergyman," she would urge, in her deprecatory tone. But her son would by no means give her any comfort. "He does n't hunt, you know;—not as I do," he would say. "And if he did, I really don't see the harm of it. A man must have some amusement, even if he be an archbishop." "He has amusement at home," Lady Lufton would answer. "What does his wife do;—and his sister?" This allusion to Lucy, however, was very soon dropped.

Lord Lufton would in no wise help her. He would

not even passively discourage the vicar, or refrain from offering to give him a seat in going to the meets. Mark and Lord Lufton had been boys together, and his lordship knew that Mark in his heart would enjoy a brush across the country quite as well as he himself. And then what was the harm of it? Lady Lufton's best aid had been in Mark's own conscience. He had taken himself to task more than once, and had promised himself that he would not become a sporting parson. Indeed, where would be his hopes of ulterior promotion, if he allowed himself to degenerate so far as that? It had been his intention, in reviewing what he considered to be the necessary proprieties of clerical life, in laying out his own future mode of living, to assume no peculiar sacerdotal strictness; he would not be known as a denouncer of dancing or of card-tables, of theatres or of novel-reading; he would take the world around him as he found it, endeavouring by precept and practice to lend a hand to the gradual amelioration which Christianity is producing; but he would attempt no sudden or majestic reforms. Cake and ale would still be popular, and ginger be hot in the mouth, let him preach ever so;—let him be never so solemn a hermit; but a bright face, a true, trusting heart, a strong arm, and a humble mind might do much in teaching those around him that men may be gay and yet not profligate, that women may be devout and yet not dead to the world.

Such had been his ideas as to his own future life; and though many would think that, as a clergyman, he should have gone about his work with more serious devotion of thought, nevertheless there was some wisdom in them;—some folly also, undoubtedly, as ap-

peared by the troubles into which they led him. "I will not affect to think that to be bad," said he to himself, "which in my heart of hearts does not seem to be bad." And thus he resolved that he might live without contamination among hunting squires. And then, being a man only too prone by nature to do as others did around him, he found by degrees that that could hardly be wrong for him which he admitted to be right for others.

But still his conscience upbraided him, and he declared to himself more than once that after this year he would hunt no more. And then his own Fanny would look at him on his return home on those days in a manner that cut him to the heart. She would say nothing to him. She never inquired in a sneering tone, and with angry eyes, whether he had enjoyed his day's sport; but when he spoke of it she could not answer him with enthusiasm; and in other matters which concerned him she was always enthusiastic. After a while, too, he made matters worse, for about the end of March he did another very foolish thing. He almost consented to buy an expensive horse from Sowerby,—an animal which he by no means wanted, and which, if once possessed, would certainly lead him into further trouble. A gentleman, when he has a good horse in his stable, does not like to leave him there eating his head off. If he be a gig-horse, the owner of him will be keen to drive a gig; if a hunter, the happy possessor will wish to be with a pack of hounds.

"Mark," said Sowerby to him one day, when they were out together, "this brute of mine is so fresh, I can hardly ride him; you are young and strong;

change with me for an hour or so." And then they did change, and the horse on which Robarts found himself mounted went away with him beautifully.

"He 's a splendid animal," said Mark, when they again met.

"Yes, for a man of your weight. He 's thrown away upon me;—too much of a horse for my purposes. I don't get along now quite as well as I used to do. He is a nice sort of hunter; just rising six, you know." How it came to pass that the price of the splendid animal was mentioned between them, I need not describe with exactness. But it did come to pass that Mr. Sowerby told the parson that the horse should be his for 130*l.* "And I really wish you 'd take him," said Sowerby. "It would be the means of partially relieving my mind of a great weight." Mark looked up into his friend's face with an air of surprise, for he did not at the moment understand how this should be the case.

"I am afraid, you know, that you will have to put your hand into your pocket sooner or later about that accursed bill;—" Mark shrank as the profane words struck his ears,—"and I should be glad to think that you had got something in hand in the way of value."

"Do you mean that I shall have to pay the whole sum of 500*l.*?"

"Oh! dear, no; nothing of the kind. But something I dare say you will have to pay. If you like to take Dandy for a hundred and thirty, you can be prepared for that amount when Tozer comes to you. The horse is dog cheap, and you will have a long day for your money." Mark at first declared, in a quiet, determined tone, that he did not want the horse; but it

afterwards appeared to him that if it were so fated that he must pay a portion of Mr. Sowerby's debts, he might as well repay himself to any extent within his power. It would be as well, perhaps, that he should take the horse and sell him. It did not occur to him that by so doing he would put it in Mr. Sowerby's power to say that some valuable consideration had passed between them with reference to this bill, and that he would be aiding that gentleman in preparing an inextricable confusion of money-matters between them. Mr. Sowerby well knew the value of this. It would enable him to make a plausible story, as he had done in that other case of Lord Lufton. "Are you going to have Dandy?" Sowerby said to him again.

"I can't say that I will, just at present," said the parson. "What should I want of him now the season 's over?"

"Exactly, my dear fellow; and what do I want of him now the season 's over? If it were the beginning of October instead of the end of March, Dandy would be up at two hundred and thirty instead of one. In six months' time that horse will be worth anything you like to ask for him. Look at his bone." The vicar did look at his bones, examining the brute in a very knowing and unclerical manner. He lifted the animal's four feet, one after another, handling the frogs, and measuring with his eye the proportion of the parts; he passed his hand up and down the legs, spanning the bones of the lower joint; he peered into his eyes, took into consideration the width of his chest, the dip of his back, the form of his ribs, the curve of his haunches, and his capabilities for breathing when pressed by work. And then he stood away a little, eying him

from the side, and taking in a general idea of the form and make of the whole. "He seems to stand over a little, I think," said the parson.

"It 's the lie of the ground. Move him about, Bob. There now; let him stand there."

"He 's not perfect," said Mark. "I don't quite like his heels; but no doubt he is a nicish cut of a horse."

"I rather think he is. If he were perfect, as you say, he would not be going into your stables for a hundred and thirty. Do you ever remember to have seen a perfect horse?"

"Your mare Mrs. Gamp was as nearly perfect as possible."

"Even Mrs. Gamp had her faults. In the first place she was a bad feeder. But one certainly does n't often come across anything much better than Mrs. Gamp." And thus the matter was talked over between them with much stable conversation, all of which tended to make Sowerby more and more oblivious of his friend's sacred profession, and perhaps to make the vicar himself too frequently oblivious of it also. But no; he was not oblivious of it. He was ever mindful of it; but mindful of it in such a manner that his thoughts on the subject were now-a-days always painful.

There is a parish called Hogglestock lying away quite in the northern extremity of the eastern division of the county,—lying also on the borders of the western division. I almost fear that it will become necessary, before this history be completed, to provide a map of Barsetshire for the due explanation of all these localities. Framley is also in the northern portion of the county, but just to the south of the grand trunk line of railway from which the branch to Barchester

strikes off at a point some thirty miles nearer to London. The station for Framley Court is Silverbridge, which is, however, in the western division of the county. Hogglestock is to the north of the railway, the line of which, however, runs through a portion of the parish, and it adjoins Framley, though the churches are as much as seven miles apart. Barsetshire, taken altogether, is a pleasant, green, tree-becrowded county, with large bosky hedges, pretty damp deep lanes, and roads with broad grass margins running along them. Such is the general nature of the county; but just up in its northern extremity this nature alters. There it is bleak and ugly, with low, artificial hedges and without wood; not uncultivated, as it is all portioned out into new-looking large fields, bearing turnips, and wheat, and mangel, all in due course of agricultural rotation; but it has none of the special beauties of English cultivation. There is not a gentleman's house in the parish of Hogglestock besides that of the clergyman; and this, though it is certainly the house of a gentleman, can hardly be said to be fit to be so. It is ugly, and straight, and small. There is a garden attached to the house, half in front of it and half behind; but this garden, like the rest of the parish, is by no means ornamental, though sufficiently useful. It produces cabbages, but no trees; potatoes of, I believe, an excellent description, but hardly any flowers, and nothing worthy of the name of a shrub. Indeed, the whole parish of Hogglestock should have been in the adjoining county, which is by no means so attractive as Barsetshire;—a fact well known to those few of my readers who are well acquainted with their own country.

Mr. Crawley, whose name has been mentioned in

these pages, was the incumbent of Hogglestock. On what principle the remuneration of our parish clergymen was settled when the original settlement was made, no deepest, keenest lover of middle-aged ecclesiastical black-letter learning can, I take it, now say. That the priests were to be paid from tithes of the parish produce, out of which tithes certain other good things were to be bought and paid for, such as church repairs and education,—of so much the most of us have an inkling. That a rector, being a big sort of parson, owned the tithes of his parish in full,—or at any rate that part of them intended for the clergyman, —and that a vicar was somebody's deputy, and therefore entitled only to a portion of the tithes, as being a lesser parson;—of so much we that are simple in such matters have a general idea. But one cannot conceive that even in this way any approximation could have been made, even in those old mediæval days, towards a fair proportioning of the pay to the work. At any rate, it is clear enough that there is no such approximation now. And what a screech would there not be among the clergy of the church, even in these reforming days, if any over-bold reformer were to suggest that such an approximation should be attempted! Let those who know clergymen, and like them, and have lived with them, only fancy it! Clergymen to be paid, not according to the temporalities of any living which they may have acquired, either by merit or favour, but in accordance with the work to be done! O Doddington! and O Stanhope, think of this, if an idea so sacrilegious can find entrance into your warm ecclesiastical bosoms! Ecclesiastical work to be bought and paid for according to its quantity and quality!

But, nevertheless, one may prophesy that we Englishmen must come to this, disagreeable as the idea undoubtedly is. Most pleasant-minded churchmen feel, I think, on this subject pretty much in the same way. Our present arrangement of parochial incomes is beloved as being time-honoured, gentlemanlike, English, and picturesque. We would fain adhere to it closely as long as we can, but we know that we do so by the force of our prejudices, and not by that of our judgment. A time-honoured, gentlemanlike, English, picturesque arrangement is so far very delightful! But are there not other attributes very desirable,—nay, absolutely necessary,—in respect to which this time-honoured, picturesque arrangement is so very deficient?

How pleasant it was, too, that one bishop should be getting fifteen thousand a year, and another with an equal cure of parsons only four! That a certain prelate could get twenty thousand one year and his successor in the same diocese only five the next! There was something in it pleasant, and picturesque. It was an arrangement endowed with feudal charms, and the change which has been made was distasteful to many of us. A bishop with a regular salary, and no appendage of land and land-bailiffs, is only half a bishop. Let any man prove to me the contrary ever so thoroughly,—let me prove it to my own self ever so often! —my heart in this matter is not thereby a whit altered. One liked to know that there was a dean or two who got his three thousand a year, and that old Dr. Purple held four stalls, one of which was golden, and the other three silver-gilt! Such knowledge was always pleasant to me! A golden stall! How sweet is the sound thereof to church-loving ears! But bishops have

been shorn of their beauty, and deans are in their decadence. A utilitarian age requires the fatness of the ecclesiastical land, in order that it may be divided out into small portions of provender, on which necessary working clergymen may live,—into portions so infinitesimally small that working clergymen can hardly live. And the full-blown rectors and vicars, with full-blown tithes,—with tithes when too full-blown for strict utilitarian principles,—will necessarily follow. Stanhope and Doddington must bow their heads, with such compensation for temporal rights as may be extracted, —but probably without such compensation as may be desired. In other trades, professions, and lines of life, men are paid according to their work. Let it be so in the church. Such will sooner or later be the edict of a utilitarian, reforming, matter-of-fact House of Parliament.

I have a scheme of my own on the subject, which I will not introduce here, seeing that neither men nor women would read it. And with reference to this matter, I will only here further explain that all these words have been brought about by the fact, necessary to be here stated, that Mr. Crawley only received one hundred and thirty pounds a year for performing the whole parochial duty of the parish of Hogglestock. And Hogglestock is a large parish. It includes two populous villages, abounding in brickmakers, a race of men very troublesome to a zealous parson who won't let men go rollicking to the devil without interference. Hogglestock has full work for two men; and yet all the funds therein applicable to parson's work is this miserable stipend of one hundred and thirty pounds a year. It is a stipend neither picturesque, nor time-

honoured, nor feudal, for Hogglestock takes rank only as a perpetual curacy.

Mr. Crawley has been mentioned before as a clergyman of whom Mr. Robarts said, that he almost thought it wrong to take a walk out of his own parish. In so saying Mark Robarts of course burlesqued his brother parson; but there can be no doubt that Mr. Crawley was a strict man,—a strict, stern, unpleasant man, and one who feared God and his own conscience. We must say a word or two of Mr. Crawley and his concerns. He was now some forty years of age, but of these he had not been in possession even of his present benefice for more than four or five. The first ten years of his life as a clergyman had been passed in performing the duties and struggling through the life of a curate in a bleak, ugly, cold parish on the northern coast of Cornwall. It had been a weary life and a fearful struggle, made up of duties ill requited and not always satisfactorily performed, of love and poverty, of increasing cares, of sickness, debt, and death. For Mr. Crawley had married almost as soon as he was ordained, and children had been born to him in that chill, comfortless Cornish cottage. He had married a lady well educated and softly nurtured, but not dowered with worldly wealth. They two had gone forth determined to fight bravely together; to disregard the world and the world's ways, looking only to God and to each other for their comfort. They would give up ideas of gentle living, of soft raiment, and delicate feeding. Others,—those that work with their hands, even the bettermost of such workers,—could live in decency and health upon even such provision as he could earn as a clergyman. In such manner would they live, so poorly

and so decently, working out their work, not with their hands but with their hearts.

And so they had established themselves, beginning the world with one bare-footed little girl of fourteen to aid them in their small household matters; and for a while they had both kept heart, loving each other dearly, and prospering somewhat in their work. But a man who has once walked the world as a gentleman knows not what it is to change his position, and place himself lower down in the social rank. Much less can he know what it is to put down the woman whom he loves. There are a thousand things, mean and trifling in themselves, which a man despises when he thinks of them in his philosophy, but to dispense with which puts his philosophy to too stern a proof. Let any plainest man who reads this think of his usual mode of getting himself into his matutinal garments, and confess how much such a struggle would cost him. And then children had come. The wife of a labouring man does rear her children, and often rears them in health, without even so many appliances of comfort as found their way into Mrs. Crawley's cottage. But the task to her was almost more than she could accomplish. Not that she ever fainted or gave way. She was made of the sterner metal of the two, and could last on while he was prostrate.

Sometimes he was prostrate;—prostrate in soul and spirit. Then would he complain with bitter voice, crying out that the world was too hard for him, that his back was broken with his burden, that his God had deserted him. For days and days, in such moods, he would stay within his cottage, never darkening the door or seeing other face than those of his own in-

mates. Those days were terrible both to him and her. He would sit there unwashed, with his unshorn face resting on his hand, with an old dressing-gown hanging loose about him, hardly tasting food, seldom speaking, striving to pray, but striving so frequently in vain. And then he would rise from his chair, and, with a burst of frenzy, call upon his Creator to remove him from his misery. In these moments she never deserted him. At one period they had four children, and though the whole weight of this young brood rested on her arms, on her muscles, on her strength of mind and body, she never ceased in her efforts to comfort him. Then at length, falling utterly upon the ground, he would pour forth piteous prayers for mercy, and after a night of sleep would once more go forth to his work.

But she never yielded to despair. The struggle was never beyond her powers of endurance. She had possessed her share of woman's loveliness, but that was now all gone. Her colour quickly faded, and the fresh, soft tints soon deserted her face and forehead. She became thin, and rough, and almost haggard; thin till her cheek-bones were nearly pressing through her skin, till her elbows were sharp, and her finger-bones as those of a skeleton. Her eye did not lose its lustre, but it became unnaturally bright, prominent, and too large for her wan face. The soft brown locks which she had once loved to brush back, scorning, as she would boast to herself, to care that they should be seen, were now sparse enough and all untidy and unclean. It was matter of little thought now whether they were seen or no. Whether he could be made fit to go into his pulpit,—whether they might be fed,—those four innocents,—and their backs kept from the cold wind,—

that was now the matter of her thought. And then two of them died, and she went forth herself to see them laid under the frost-bound sod, lest he should faint in his work over their graves. For he would ask aid from no man. Such was ever his boast through all his trouble. Two of them died, but their illness had been long; and then debts came upon them. Debt, indeed, had been creeping on them with slow but sure feet during the last five years. Who can see his children hungry, and not take bread if it be offered? Who can see his wife lying in sharpest want, and not seek a remedy if there be a remedy within reach? So debt had come upon them, and rude men pressed for small sums of money,—for sums small to the world, but impossibly large to them. And he would hide himself within there, in that cranny of an inner chamber,—hide himself with deep shame from the world, with shame, and a sinking heart, and a broken spirit.

But had such a man no friend? it will be said. Such men, I take it, do not make many friends. But this man was not utterly friendless. Almost every year one visit was paid to him in his Cornish curacy by a brother clergyman, an old college friend, who, as far as might in him lie, did give aid to the curate and his wife. This gentleman would take up his abode for a week at a farmer's, in the neighbourhood, and though he found Mr. Crawley in despair, he would leave him with some drops of comfort in his soul. Nor were the benefits in this respect all on one side. Mr. Crawley, though at some periods weak enough for himself, could be strong for others; and, more than once, was strong to the great advantage of this man whom he loved. And then, too, pecuniary assistance was forthcoming,

—in those earlier years not in great amount, for this friend was not then among the rich ones of the earth, —but in amount sufficient for that moderate hearth, if only its acceptance could have been managed. But in that matter there were difficulties without end. Of absolute money tenders Mr. Crawley would accept none. But a bill here and there was paid, the wife assisting; and shoes came for Kate,—till Kate was placed beyond the need of shoes; and cloth for Harry and Frank found its way surreptitiously in beneath the cover of that wife's solitary trunk,—cloth with which those lean fingers worked garments for the two boys; to be worn,—such was God's will,—only by the one.

Such were Mr. and Mrs. Crawley in their Cornish curacy, and during their severest struggles. To one who thinks that a fair day's work is worth a fair day's wages, it seems hard enough that a man should work so hard and receive so little. There will be those who think that the fault was all his own, in marrying so young. But still there remains that question, Is not a fair day's work worth a fair day's wages? This man did work hard,—at a task perhaps the hardest of any that a man may do; and for ten years he earned some seventy pounds a year. Will any one say he received fair wages for his fair work, let him be married or single? And yet there are so many who would fain pay their clergy, if they only knew how to apply their money! But that is a long subject, as Mr. Robarts had told Miss Dunstable. Such was Mr. Crawley in his Cornish curacy.

CHAPTER XV.

LADY LUFTON'S AMBASSADOR.

And then, in the days which followed, that friend of Mr. Crawley's, whose name, by-the-bye, is yet to be mentioned, received quick and great promotion. Mr. Arabin by name he was then;—Dr. Arabin afterwards, when that quick and great promotion reached its climax. He had been simply a fellow of Lazarus in those former years. Then he became vicar of St. Ewold's, in East Barsetshire, and had not yet got himself settled there when he married the widow Bold, a widow with belongings in land and funded money, and with but one small baby as an incumbrance. Nor had he even yet married her, had only engaged himself so to do, when they made him dean of Barchester,—all which may be read in the former portions of this chronicle. And now that he was wealthy, the new dean did contrive to pay the debts of his poor friend, some lawyer of Camelford assisting him. It was but a paltry schedule after all, amounting in the total to something not much above a hundred pounds. And then, in the course of eighteen months, this poor piece of preferment fell in the dean's way, this incumbency of Hogglestock with its stipend reaching one hundred and thirty pounds a year. Even that was worth double the Cornish curacy, and there was, moreover, a house

attached to it. Poor Mrs. Crawley, when she heard of it, thought that their struggles of poverty were now well nigh over. What might not be done with a hundred and thirty pounds by people who had lived for ten years on seventy?

And so they moved away out of that cold, bleak country, carrying with them their humble household gods, and settled themselves in another country, cold and bleak also, but less terribly so than the former. They settled themselves, and again began their struggles against man's hardness and the devil's zeal. I have said that Mr. Crawley was a stern, unpleasant man; and it certainly was so. The man must be made of very sterling stuff whom continued and undeserved misfortune does not make unpleasant. This man had so far succumbed to grief, that it had left upon him its marks, palpable and not to be effaced. He cared little for society, judging men to be doing evil who did care for it. He knew as a fact, and believed with all his heart, that these sorrows had come to him from the hand of God, and that they would work for his weal in the long run; but not the less did they make him morose, silent, and dogged. He had always at his heart a feeling that he and his had been ill-used; and he too often solaced himself, at the devil's bidding, with the conviction that eternity would make equal that which life in this world had made so unequal;—the last bait that with which the devil angles after those who are struggling to elude his rod and line.

The Framley property did not run into the parish of Hogglestock; but nevertheless Lady Lufton did what she could in the way of kindness to these newcomers. Providence had not supplied Hogglestock

with a Lady Lufton, or with any substitute in the shape of lord or lady, squire or squiress. The Hogglestock farmers, male and female, were a rude, rough set, not bordering in their social rank on the farmer gentle; and Lady Lufton, knowing this, and hearing something of these Crawleys from Mrs. Arabin, the dean's wife, trimmed her lamps, so that they should shed a wider light, and pour forth some of their influence on that forlorn household. And as regards Mrs. Crawley, Lady Lufton by no means found that her work and good-will were thrown away. Mrs. Crawley accepted her kindness with thankfulness, and returned to some of the softnesses of life under her hand. As for dining at Framley Court, that was out of the question. Mr. Crawley, she knew, would not hear of it, even if other things were fitting and appliances were at command. Indeed, Mrs. Crawley at once said that she felt herself unfit to go through such a ceremony with anything like comfort. The dean, she said, would persist in talking of their going to stay at the deanery; but she thought it quite impossible that either of them should endure even that. But, all the same, Lady Lufton was a comfort to her; and the poor woman felt that it was well to have a lady near her in case of need.

The task was much harder with Mr. Crawley, but even with him it was not altogether unsuccessful. Lady Lufton talked to him of his parish and of her own; made Mark Robarts go to him, and by degrees did something towards civilising him. Between him and Robarts too there grew up an intimacy rather than a friendship. Robarts would submit to his opinion on matters of ecclesiastical and even theological law,

would listen to him with patience, would agree with him where he could, and differ from him mildly when he could not. For Robarts was a man who made himself pleasant to all men. And thus, under Lady Lufton's wing, there grew up a connection between Framley and Hogglestock, in which Mrs. Robarts also assisted. And now that Lady Lufton was looking about her, to see how she might best bring proper clerical influence to bear upon her own recreant fox-hunting parson, it occurred to her that she might use Mr. Crawley in the matter. Mr. Crawley would certainly be on her side as far as opinion went, and would have no fear as to expressing his opinion to his brother clergyman. So she sent for Mr. Crawley. In appearance he was the very opposite to Mark Robarts. He was a lean, slim, meagre man, with shoulders slightly curved, and pale, lank, long locks of ragged hair; his forehead was high, but his face was narrow; his small grey eyes were deeply sunken in his head, his nose was well formed, his lips thin, and his mouth expressive. Nobody could look at him without seeing that there was a purpose and a meaning in his countenance. He always wore, in summer and winter, a long, dusky grey coat, which was buttoned close up to his neck and descended almost to his heels. He was full six feet high, but being so slight in build, he looked as though he were taller. He came at once at Lady Lufton's bidding, putting himself into the gig beside the servant, to whom he spoke no single word during the journey. And the man, looking into his face, was struck with taciturnity. Now Mark Robarts would have talked with him the whole way from Hogglestock to Framley Court; discoursing partly as to horses and land, but

partly also as to higher things. And then Lady Lufton opened her mind and told her griefs to Mr. Crawley, urging, however, through the whole length of her narrative, that Mr. Robarts was an excellent parish clergyman,—"just such a clergyman in his church as I would wish him to be," she explained, with the view of saving herself from an expression of any of Mr. Crawley's special ideas as to church teaching, and of confining him to the one subject-matter in hand; "but he got this living so young, Mr. Crawley, that he is hardly quite as steady as I could wish him to be. It has been as much my fault as his own in placing him in such a position so early in life."

"I think it has," said Mr. Crawley, who might perhaps be a little sore on such a subject.

"Quite so; quite so," continued her ladyship, swallowing down with a gulp a certain sense of anger. "But that is done now, and is past cure. That Mr. Robarts will become a credit to his profession, I do not doubt, for his heart is in the right place and his sentiments are good; but I fear that at present he is succumbing to temptation."

"I am told that he hunts two or three times a week. Everybody round us is talking about it."

"No, Mr. Crawley; not two or three times a week; very seldom above once, I think. And then I do believe he does it more with the view of being with Lord Lufton than anything else."

"I cannot see that that would make the matter better," said Mr. Crawley.

"It would show that he was not strongly imbued with a taste which I cannot but regard as vicious in a clergyman."

"It must be vicious in all men," said Mr. Crawley. "It is in itself cruel, and leads to idleness and profligacy." Again Lady Lufton made a gulp. She had called Mr. Crawley thither to her aid, and felt that it would be inexpedient to quarrel with him. But she did not like to be told that her son's amusement was idle and profligate. She had always regarded hunting as a proper pursuit for a country gentleman. It was, indeed, in her eyes one of the peculiar institutions of country life in England, and it may be almost said that she looked upon the Barsetshire hunt as something sacred. She could not endure to hear that a fox was trapped, and allowed her turkeys to be purloined without a groan. Such being the case, she did not like being told that it was vicious, and had by no means wished to consult Mr. Crawley on that matter. But nevertheless she swallowed down her wrath.

"It is at any rate unbecoming in a clergyman," she said; "and as I know that Mr. Robarts places a high value on your opinion, perhaps you will not object to advise him to discontinue it. He might possibly feel aggrieved were I to interfere personally on such a question."

"I have no doubt he would," said Mr. Crawley. "It is not within a woman's province to give counsel to a clergyman on such a subject, unless she be very near and very dear to him;—his wife, or mother, or sister."

"As living in the same parish, you know, and being, perhaps——" the leading person in it, and the one who naturally rules the others. Those would have been the fitting words for the expression of her ladyship's ideas; but she remembered herself, and did not use them. She had made up her mind that, great as

her influence ought to be, she was not the proper person to speak to Mr. Robarts as to his pernicious, unclerical habits, and she would not now depart from her resolve by attempting to prove that she was the proper person.

"Yes," said Mr. Crawley, "just so. All that would entitle him to offer you his counsel if he thought that your mode of life was such as to require it; but could by no means justify you in addressing yourself to him." This was very hard upon Lady Lufton. She was endeavouring with all her woman's strength to do her best, and endeavouring so to do it that the feelings of the sinner might be spared; and yet the ghostly comforter whom she had evoked to her aid treated her as though she were arrogant and overbearing. She acknowledged the weakness of her own position with reference to her parish clergyman by calling in the aid of Mr. Crawley; and, under such circumstances, he might, at any rate, have abstained from throwing that weakness in her teeth.

"Well, sir, I hope my mode of life may not require it; but that is not exactly to the point. What I wish to know is, whether you will speak to Mr. Robarts?"

"Certainly I will," said he.

"Then I shall be much obliged to you. But, Mr. Crawley, pray,—pray, remember this: I would not on any account wish that you should be harsh with him. He is an excellent young man, and——"

"Lady Lufton, if I do this, I can only do it in my own way, as best I may, using such words as God may give me at the time. I hope that I am harsh to no man;—but it is worse than useless, in all cases, to speak anything but the truth."

"Of course,—of course."

"If the ears be too delicate to hear the truth, the mind will be too perverse to profit by it." And then Mr. Crawley got up to take his leave. But Lady Lufton insisted that he should go with her to luncheon. He hummed and ha'd and would fain have refused, but on this subject she was peremptory. It might be that she was unfit to advise a clergyman as to his duties, but in a matter of hospitality she did know what she was about. Mr. Crawley should not leave the house without refreshment. As to this, she carried her point; and Mr. Crawley,—when the matter before him was cold roast-beef and hot potatoes, instead of the relative position of a parish priest and his parishioner,—became humble, submissive, and almost timid. Lady Lufton recommended Madeira instead of sherry, and Mr. Crawley obeyed at once, and was, indeed, perfectly unconscious of the difference. Then there was a basket of sea-kale in the gig for Mrs. Crawley. That he would have left behind had he dared, but he did not dare. Not a word was said to him as to the marmalade for the children which was hidden under the sea-kale, Lady Lufton feeling well aware that that would find its way to its proper destination without any necessity for his co-operation. And then Mr. Crawley returned home in the Framley Court gig.

Three or four days after this he walked over to Framley Parsonage. This he did on a Saturday, having learned that the hounds never hunted on that day; and he started early, so that he might be sure to catch Mr. Robarts before he went out on his parish business. He was quite early enough to attain this object, for when he reached the parsonage door at half-past nine,

the vicar, with his wife and sister, were just sitting down to breakfast. "Oh, Crawley," said Robarts, before the other had well spoken, "you are a capital fellow;" and then he got him into a chair, and Mrs. Robarts had poured him out tea, and Lucy had surrendered to him a knife and plate, before he knew under what guise to excuse his coming among them.

"I hope you will excuse this intrusion," at last he muttered; "but I have a few words of business to which I will request your attention presently."

"Certainly," said Robarts, conveying a broiled kidney on to the plate before Mr. Crawley; "but there is no preparation for business like a good breakfast. Lucy, hand Mr. Crawley the buttered toast. Eggs, Fanny; where are the eggs?" And then John, in livery, brought in the fresh eggs. "Now we shall do. I always eat my eggs while they 're hot, Crawley, and I advise you to do the same." To all this Mr. Crawley said very little, and he was not at all at home under the circumstances. Perhaps a thought did pass across his brain, as to the difference between the meal which he had left on his own table, and that which he now saw before him; and as to any cause which might exist for such difference. But, if so, it was a very fleeting thought, for he had far other matter now fully occupying his mind. And then the breakfast was over, and in a few minutes the two clergymen found themselves together in the parsonage study.

"Mr. Robarts," began the senior, when he had seated himself uncomfortably on one of the ordinary chairs at the farther side of the well-stored library table, while Mark was sitting at his ease in his own arm-chair by the fire, "I have called upon you on an

unpleasant business." Mark's mind immediately flew off to Mr. Sowerby's bill, but he could not think it possible that Mr. Crawley could have had anything to do with that.

"But as a brother clergyman, and as one who esteems you much and wishes you well, I have thought myself bound to take this matter in hand."

"What matter is it, Crawley?"

"Mr. Robarts, men say that your present mode of life is one that is not befitting a soldier in Christ's army."

"Men say so! What men?"

"The men around you, of your own neighbourhood; those who watch your life, and know all your doings; those who look to see you walking as a lamp to guide their feet, but find you consorting with horse-jockeys and hunters, galloping after hounds, and taking your place among the vainest of worldly pleasure-seekers; those who have a right to expect an example of good living, and who think that they do not see it." Mr. Crawley had gone at once to the root of the matter, and in doing so had certainly made his own task so much the easier. There is nothing like going to the root of the matter at once when one has on hand an unpleasant piece of business.

"And have such men deputed you to come here?"

"No one has or could depute me. I have come to speak my own mind, not that of another. But I refer to what those around you think and say, because it is to them that your duties are due. You owe it to those around you to live a godly, cleanly life;—as you owe it also, in a much higher way, to your Father who is in heaven. I now make bold to ask you whether you

are doing your best to lead such a life as that?" And then he remained silent, waiting for an answer. He was a singular man; so humble and meek, so unutterably inefficient and awkward in the ordinary intercourse of life, but so bold and enterprising, almost eloquent, on the one subject which was the work of his mind! As he sat there, he looked into his companion's face from out his sunken grey eyes with a gaze which made his victim quail. And then he repeated his words: "I now make bold to ask you, Mr. Robarts, whether you are doing your best to lead such a life as may become a parish clergyman among his parishioners?" Then again he paused for an answer.

"There are but few of us," said Mark, in a low tone, "who could safely answer that question in the affirmative."

"But are there many, think you, among us who would find the question so unanswerable as yourself? And even were there many, would you, young, enterprising, and talented as you are, be content to be numbered among them? Are you satisfied to be a castaway after you have taken upon yourself Christ's armour? If you will say so, I am mistaken in you, and will go my way." There was again a pause, and then he went on: "Speak to me, my brother; and open your heart, if it be possible." And rising from his chair, he walked across the room, and laid his hand tenderly on Mark's shoulder. Mark had been sitting lounging in his chair, and had at first, for a moment only, thought to brazen it out. But all idea of brazening had now left him. He had raised himself from his comfortable ease, and was leaning forward with his elbow on the table. But now when he heard these

words, he allowed his head to sink upon his arms, and he buried his face between his hands.

"It is a terrible falling off," continued Crawley; "terrible in the fall, but doubly terrible through that difficulty of returning. But it cannot be that it should content you to place yourself as one among those thoughtless sinners, for the crushing of whose sin you have been placed here among them. You become a hunting parson, and ride with a happy mind among blasphemers and mocking devils,—you, whose aspirations were so high, who have spoken so often and so well of the duties of a minister of Christ; you, who can argue in your pride as to the petty details of your church, as though the broad teachings of its great and simple lessons were not enough for your energies! It cannot be that I have had a hypocrite beside me in all those eager controversies!"

"Not a hypocrite,—not a hypocrite," said Mark, in a tone which was almost reduced to a sobbing.

"But a castaway! Is it so that I must call you? No, Mr. Robarts, not a castaway; neither a hypocrite, nor a castaway; but one who in walking has stumbled in the dark and bruised his feet among the stones. Henceforth let him take a lantern in his hand, and look warily to his path, and walk cautiously among the thorns and rocks,—cautiously, but yet boldly, with manly courage but Christian meekness, as all men should walk on their pilgrimage through this vale of tears." And then, without giving his companion time to stop him, he hurried out of the room, and from the house, and without again seeing any others of the family, stalked back on his road to Hogglestock, thus tramping fourteen miles through the deep mud

in performance of the mission on which he had been sent.

It was some hours before Mr. Robarts left his room. As soon as he found that Crawley was really gone, and that he should see him no more, he turned the lock of his door, and sat himself down to think over his present life. At about eleven his wife knocked, not knowing whether that other strange clergyman were there or no, for none had seen his departure. But Mark, answering cheerily, desired that he might be left to his studies. Let us hope that his thoughts and mental resolves were then of service to him.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. PODGENS'S BABY.

THE hunting season had now nearly passed away, and the great ones of the Barsetshire world were thinking of the glories of London. Of these glories Lady Lufton always thought with much inquietude of mind. She would fain have remained throughout the whole year at Framley Court did not certain grave considerations render such a course on her part improper in her own estimation. All the Lady Luftons of whom she had heard, dowager and ante-dowager, had always had their seasons in London, till old age had incapacitated them for such doings,—sometimes for clearly long after the arrival of such period. And then she had an idea, perhaps not altogether erroneous, that she annually imported back with her into the country somewhat of the passing civilisation of the times. May we not say an idea that certainly was not erroneous? for how otherwise is it that the forms of new caps and remodelled shapes for women's waists find their way down into agricultural parts, and that the rural eye learns to appreciate grace and beauty? There are those who think that remodelled waists and new caps had better be kept to the towns; but such people, if they would follow out their own argument, would wish to see ploughboys painted with ruddle and milkmaids covered

with skins. For these and other reasons Lady Lufton always went to London in April, and stayed there till the beginning of June. But for her this was usually a period of penance. In London she was no very great personage. She had never laid herself out for greatness of that sort, and did not shine as a lady-patroness or state-secretary in the female cabinet of fashion. She was dull and listless, and without congenial pursuits in London, and spent her happiest moments in reading accounts of what was being done at Framley, and in writing orders for further local information of the same kind. But on this occasion there was a matter of vital import to give an interest of its own to her visit to town. She was to entertain Griselda Grantly, and, as far as might be possible, to induce her son to remain in Griselda's society. The plan of the campaign was to be as follows;—Mrs. Grantly and the archdeacon were in the first place to go up to London for a month, taking Griselda with them; and then, when they returned to Plumstead, Griselda was to go to Lady Lufton. This arrangement was not at all points agreeable to Lady Lufton, for she knew that Mrs. Grantly did not turn her back on the Hartletop people quite as cordially as she should do, considering the terms of the Lufton-Grantly family treaty. But then Mrs. Grantly might have alleged in excuse the slow manner in which Lord Lufton proceeded in the making and declaring of his love, and the absolute necessity which there is for two strings to one's bow, when one string may be in any way doubtful. Could it be possible that Mrs. Grantly had heard anything of that unfortunate Platonic friendship with Lucy Robarts?

There came a letter from Mrs. Grantly just about

the end of March, which added much to Lady Lufton's uneasiness, and made her more than ever anxious to be herself on the scene of action and to have Griselda in her own hands. After some communications of mere ordinary importance with reference to the London world in general and the Lufton-Grantly world in particular, Mrs. Grantly wrote confidentially about her daughter:—"It would be useless to deny," she said, with a mother's pride and a mother's humility, "that she is very much admired. She is asked out a great deal more than I can take her, and to houses to which I myself by no means wish to go. I could not refuse her as to Lady Hartletop's first ball, for there will be nothing else this year like them; and of course when with you, dear Lady Lufton, that house will be out of the question. So indeed would it be with me, were I myself only concerned. The duke was there, of course, and I really wonder Lady Hartletop should not be more discreet in her own drawing-room when all the world is there. It is clear to me that Lord Dumbello admires Griselda much more than I could wish. She, dear girl, has such excellent sense that I do not think it likely that her head should be turned by it; but with how many girls would not the admiration of such a man be irresistible? The marquis, you know, is very feeble, and I am told that since this rage for building has come on, the Lancashire property is over two hundred thousand a year!! I do not think that Lord Dumbello has said much to her. Indeed, it seems to me that he never does say much to any one. But he always stands up to dance with her, and I see that he is uneasy and fidgety when she stands up with any other partner whom he could care about. It was

really embarrassing to see him the other night at Miss Dunstable's, when Griselda was dancing with a certain friend of ours. But she did look very well that evening, and I have seldom seen her more animated!"

All this, and a great deal more of the same sort in the same letter, tended to make Lady Lufton anxious to be in London. It was quite certain,—there was no doubt of that, at any rate,—that Griselda would see no more of Lady Hartletop's meretricious grandeur when she had been transferred to Lady Lufton's guardianship. And she, Lady Lufton, did wonder that Mrs. Grantly should have taken her daughter to such a house. All about Lady Hartletop was known to all the world. It was known that it was almost the only house in London at which the Duke of Omnium was constantly to be met. Lady Lufton herself could almost as soon thing of taking a young girl to Gatherum Castle; and on these accounts she did feel rather angry with her friend Mrs. Grantly. But then perhaps she did not sufficiently calculate that Mrs. Grantly's letter had been written purposely to produce such feelings, —with the express view of awakening her ladyship to the necessity of action. Indeed, in such a matter as this, Mrs. Grantly was a more able woman than Lady Lufton,—more able to see her way and to follow it out. The Lufton-Grantly alliance was in her mind the best, seeing that she did not regard money as every thing. But failing that, the Hartletop-Grantly was not bad. Regarding it as a second string to her bow, she thought that it was not at all bad. Lady Lufton's reply was very affectionate. She declared how happy she was to know that Griselda was enjoying herself; she insinuated that Lord Dumbello was known to the

world as a fool, and his mother as——being not a bit better than she ought to be; and then she added that circumstances would bring herself up to town four days sooner than she had expected, and that she hoped her dear Griselda would come to her at once. Lord Lufton, she said, though he would not sleep in Bruton Street,—Lady Lufton lived in Bruton Street,—had promised to pass there as much of his time as his parliamentary duties would permit.

O Lady Lufton! Lady Lufton! Did it not occur to you, when you wrote those last words, intending that they should have so strong an effect on the mind of your correspondent, that you were telling a—— tarradiddle? Was it not the case that you had said to your son, in your own dear, kind, motherly way: "Ludovic, we shall see something of you in Bruton Street this year, shall we not? Griselda Grantly will be with me, and we must not let her be dull;—must we?" And then had he not answered, "Oh, of course, mother," and sauntered out of the room, not altogether graciously? Had he, or you, said a word about his parliamentary duties? Not a word! O Lady Lufton! have you not now written a tarradiddle to your friend? In these days we are becoming very strict about truth with our children; terribly strict occasionally, when we consider the natural weakness of the moral courage at the ages of ten, twelve, and fourteen. But I do not know that we are at all increasing the measure of strictness with which we, grown-up people, regulate our own truth and falsehood. Heaven forbid that I should be thought to advocate falsehood in children; but an untruth is more pardonable in them than in their parents. Lady Lufton's tarradiddle was of a

nature that is usually considered excusable,—at least with grown people; but, nevertheless, she would have been nearer to perfection could she have confined herself to the truth. Let us suppose that a boy were to write home from school, saying that another boy had promised to come and stay with him, that other having given no such promise;—what a very naughty boy would that first boy be in the eyes of his pastors and masters!

That little conversation between Lord Lufton and his mother,—in which nothing was said about his lordship's parliamentary duties,—took place on the evening before he started for London. On that occasion he certainly was not in his best humour, nor did he behave to his mother in his kindest manner. He had left the room when she began to talk about Miss Grantly; and once again in the course of the evening, when his mother, not very judiciously, said a word or two about Griselda's beauty, he had remarked that she was no conjurer, and would hardly set the Thames on fire. "If she were a conjurer!" said Lady Lufton, rather piqued, "I should not now be going to take her out in London. I know many of those sort of girls whom you call conjurers; they can talk for ever, and always talk either loudly or in a whisper. I don't like them, and I am sure that you do not in your heart."

"Oh, as to liking them in my heart,—that is being very particular."

"Griselda Grantly is a lady, and as such I shall be happy to have her with me in town. She is just the girl that Justinia will like to have with her."

"Exactly," said Lord Lufton. "She will do ex-

ceedingly well for Justinia." Now this was not good-natured on the part of Lord Lufton; and his mother felt it the more strongly, inasmuch as it seemed to signify that he was setting his back up against the Lufton-Grantly alliance. She had been pretty sure that he would do so in the event of his suspecting that a plot was being laid to catch him, and now it almost appeared that he did suspect such a plot. Why else that sarcasm as to Griselda doing very well for his sister?

And now we must go back and describe a little scene at Framley, which will account for his lordship's ill-humour and suspicions, and explain how it came to pass that he so snubbed his mother. This scene took place about ten days after the evening on which Mrs. Robarts and Lucy were walking together in the parsonage garden, and during those ten days Lucy had not once allowed herself to be entrapped into any special conversation with the young peer. She had dined at Framley Court during that interval, and had spent a second evening there; Lord Lufton had also been up at the parsonage on three or four occasions, and had looked for her in her usual walks; but, nevertheless, they had never come together in their old familiar way since the day on which Lady Lufton had hinted her fears to Mrs. Robarts.

Lord Lufton had very much missed her. At first he had not attributed this change to a purposed scheme of action on the part of any one; nor, indeed, had he much thought about it, although he had felt himself to be annoyed. But as the period fixed for his departure grew near, it did occur to him as very odd that he should never hear Lucy's voice unless when she said a few words to his mother, or to her sister-in-law. And

then he made up his mind that he would speak to her before he went, and that the mystery should be explained to him. And he carried out his purpose, calling at the parsonage on one special afternoon; and it was on the evening of the same day that his mother sang the praises of Griselda Grantly so inopportunely. Robarts, he knew, was then absent from home, and Mrs. Robarts was with his mother down at the house, preparing lists of the poor people to be specially attended to in Lady Lufton's approaching absence. Taking advantage of this, he walked boldly in through the parsonage garden; asked the gardener, with an indifferent voice, whether either of the ladies were at home, and then caught poor Lucy exactly on the doorstep of the house.

"Were you going in or out, Miss Robarts?"

"Well, I was going out," said Lucy; and she began to consider how best she might get quit of any prolonged encounter.

"Oh, going out, were you? I don't know whether I may offer to——"

"Well, Lord Lufton, not exactly, seeing that I am about to pay a visit to our near neighbour, Mrs. Podgens. Perhaps you have no particular call towards Mrs. Podgens's just at present, or to her new baby?"

"And have you any very particular call that way?"

"Yes, and especially to Baby Podgens. Baby Podgens is a real little duck,—only just two days old." And Lucy, as she spoke, progressed a step or two, as though she were determined not to remain there talking on the doorstep. A slight cloud came across his brow as he saw this, and made him resolve that she should not gain her purpose. He was not going to

be foiled in that way by such a girl as Lucy Robarts. He had come there to speak to her, and speak to her he would. There had been enough of intimacy between them to justify him in demanding, at any rate, as much as that.

"Miss Robarts," he said, "I am starting for London to-morrow, and if I do not say good-bye to you now, I shall not be able to do so at all."

"Good-bye, Lord Lufton," she said, giving him her hand, and smiling on him with her old genial, good-humoured, racy smile. "And mind you bring into Parliament that law which you promised me for defending my young chickens."

He took her hand, but that was not all he wanted. "Surely Mrs. Podgens and her baby can wait ten minutes. I shall not see you again for months to come, and yet you seem to begrudge me two words."

"Not two hundred if they can be of any service to you," said she, walking cheerily back into the drawing-room; "only I did not think it worth while to waste your time, as Fanny is not here." She was infinitely more collected, more master of herself than he was. Inwardly, she did tremble at the idea of what was coming, but outwardly she showed no agitation,—none as yet. If only she could so possess herself as to refrain from doing so, when she heard what he might have to say to her!

He hardly knew what it was for the saying of which he had so resolutely come thither. He had by no means made up his mind that he loved Lucy Robarts; nor had he made up his mind that, loving her, he would, or that, loving her, he would not, make her his wife. He had never used his mind in the matter in

any way, either for good or evil. He had learned to like her and to think that she was very pretty. He had found out that it was very pleasant to talk to her; whereas, talking to Griselda Grantly, and, indeed, to some other young ladies of his acquaintance, was often hard work. The half-hours which he had spent with Lucy had always been satisfactory to him. He had found himself to be more bright with her than with other people, and more apt to discuss subjects worth discussing;—and thus it had come about that he thoroughly liked Lucy Robarts. As to whether his affection was Platonic or anti-Platonic he had never asked himself; but he had spoken words to her, shortly before that sudden cessation of their intimacy, which might have been taken as anti-Platonic by any girl so disposed to regard them. He had not thrown himself at her feet, and declared himself to be devoured by a consuming passion; but he had touched her hands as lovers touch those of women whom they love; he had had his confidences with her, talking to her of his own mother, of his sister, and of his friends;—and he had called her his own dear friend Lucy. All this had been very sweet to her, but very poisonous also. She had declared to herself very frequently that her liking for this young nobleman was as purely a feeling of mere friendship as was that of her brother; and she had professed to herself that she would give the lie to the world's cold sarcasms on such subjects. But she had now acknowledged that the sarcasms of the world on that matter, cold though they may be, are not the less true; and having so acknowledged, she had resolved that all close alliance between herself and Lord Lufton must be at an end. She had come to a con-

clusion, but he had come to none; and in this frame of mind he was now there with the object of reopening that dangerous friendship which she had had the sense to close.

"And so you are going to-morrow?" she said, as soon as they were both within the drawing-room.

"Yes; I 'm off by the early train to-morrow morning, and Heaven knows when we may meet again."

"Next winter, shall we not?"

"Yes, for a day or two, I suppose. I do not know whether I shall pass another winter here. Indeed, one can never say where one will be."

"No, one can't; such as you, at least, cannot. I am not of a migratory tribe myself."

"I wish you were."

"I 'm not a bit obliged to you. Your nomade life does not agree with young ladies."

"I think they are taking to it pretty freely, then. We have unprotected young women all about the world."

"And great bores you find them, I suppose?"

"No; I like it. The more we can get out of old-fashioned grooves the better I am pleased. I should be a radical to-morrow,—a regular man of the people,—only I should break my mother's heart."

"Whatever you do, Lord Lufton, do not do that."

"That is why I have liked you so much," he continued; "because you get out of the grooves."

"Do I?"

"Yes; and go along by yourself, guiding your own footsteps; not carried hither and thither, just as your grandmother's old tramway may chance to take you."

"Do you know I have a strong idea that my grand-

mother's old tramway will be the safest and the best after all? I have not left it very far, and I certainly mean to go back to it."

"That 's impossible! An army of old women, with coils of ropes made out of time-honoured prejudices, could not draw you back."

"No, Lord Lufton, that is true. But one——" and then she stopped herself. She could not tell him that one loving mother, anxious for her only son, had sufficed to do it. She could not explain to him that this departure from the established tramway had already broken her own rest, and turned her peaceful, happy life into a grievous battle.

"I know that you are trying to go back," he said. "Do you think that I have eyes and cannot see? Come, Lucy, you and I have been friends, and we must not part in this way. My mother is a paragon among women. I say it in earnest;—a paragon among women; and her love for me is the perfection of motherly love."

"It is; it is. I am so glad that you acknowledge it."

"I should be worse than a brute did I not do so; but, nevertheless, I cannot allow her to lead me in all things. Were I to do so I should cease to be a man."

"Where can you find any one who will counsel you so truly?"

"But, nevertheless, I must rule myself. I do not know whether my suspicions may be perfectly just, but I fancy that she has created this estrangement between you and me. Has it not been so?"

"Certainly not by speaking to me," said Lucy, blushing ruby-red through every vein of her deep-tinted

face. But though she could not command her blood, her voice was still under her control;—her voice and her manner.

"But has she not done so in some way? You, I know, will tell me nothing but the truth."

"I will tell you nothing on this matter, Lord Lufton, whether true or false. It is a subject on which it does not concern me to speak."

"Ah! I understand," he said; and rising from his chair, he stood against the chimney-piece with his back to the fire. "She cannot leave me alone to choose for myself, my friends, and my own——" but he did not fill up the void.

"But why tell me this, Lord Lufton?"

"No! I am not to choose my own friends, though they be among the best and purest of God's creatures. Lucy, I cannot think that you have ceased to have a regard for me. That you had a regard for me, I am sure." She felt that it was almost unmanly of him thus to seek her out, and hunt her down, and then throw upon her the whole weight of the explanation that his coming thither made necessary. But, nevertheless, the truth must be told, and with God's help she would find strength for the telling of it.

"Yes, Lord Lufton, I had a regard for you,—and have. By that word you mean something more than the customary feeling of acquaintance which may ordinarily prevail between a gentleman and lady of different families, who have known each other so short a time as we have done."

"Yes, something much more," said he with energy.

"Well, I will not define the much;—something closer than that?"

"Yes, and warmer, and dearer, and more worthy of two human creatures who value each other's minds and hearts."

"Some such closer regard I have felt for you,—very foolishly. Stop! You have made me speak, and do not interrupt me now. Does not your conscience tell you that in doing so I have unwisely deserted those wise old grandmother's tramways of which you spoke just now? It has been pleasant to me to do so. I have liked the feeling of independence with which I have thought that I might indulge in an open friendship with such as you are. And your rank, so different from my own, has doubtless made this more attractive."

"Nonsense!"

"Ah! but it has. I know it now. But what will the world say of me as to such an alliance?"

"The world!"

"Yes, the world! I am not such a philosopher as to disregard it, though you may afford to do so. The world will say that I, the parson's sister, set my cap at the young lord, and that the young lord made a fool of me."

"The world shall say no such thing," said Lord Lufton, very imperiously.

"Ah! but it will. You can no more stop it than King Canute could the waters. Your mother has interfered wisely to spare me from this; and the only favour that I can ask you is that you will spare me also." And then she got up, as though she intended at once to walk forth to her visit to Mrs. Podgens's baby.

"Stop, Lucy!" he said, putting himself between her and the door.

"It must not be Lucy any longer, Lord Lufton. I was madly foolish when I first allowed it."

"By heavens! but it shall be Lucy,—Lucy before all the world. My Lucy, my own Lucy;—my heart's best friend, and chosen love. Lucy, there is my hand. How long you may have had my heart it matters not to say now." The game was at her feet now, and no doubt she felt her triumph. Her ready wit and speaking lip, not her beauty, had brought him to her side. And now he was forced to acknowledge that her power over him had been supreme. Sooner than leave her he would risk all. She did feel her triumph; but there was nothing in her face to tell him that she did so. As to what she would now do she did not for a moment doubt. He had been precipitated into the declaration he had made not by his love, but by his embarrassment. She had thrown in his teeth the injury he had done her, and he had then been moved by his generosity to repair that injury by the noblest sacrifice which he could make. But Lucy Robarts was not the girl to accept a sacrifice. He had stepped forward as though he were going to clasp her round the waist, but she receded, and got beyond the reach of his hand. "Lord Lufton," she said, "when you are more cool you will know that this is wrong. The best thing for both of us now is to part."

"Not the best thing, but the very worst, till we perfectly understand each other."

"Then perfectly understand me, that I cannot be your wife."

"Lucy! do you mean that you cannot learn to love me?"

"I mean that I shall not try. Do not persevere in this, or you will have to hate yourself for your own folly."

"But I will persevere till you accept my love, or say

with your hand on your heart that you cannot and will not love me."

"Then I must beg you to let me go," and having so said, she paused while he walked once or twice hurriedly up and down the room. "And, Lord Lufton," she continued, "if you will leave me now, the words that you have spoken shall be as though they had never been uttered."

"I care not who knows they have been uttered. The sooner that they are known to all the world the better I shall be pleased; unless, indeed——"

"Think of your mother, Lord Lufton."

"What can I do better than give her as a daughter the best and sweetest girl I have ever met? When my mother really knows you, she will love you as I do. Lucy, say one word to me of comfort."

"I will say no word to you that shall injure your future comfort. It is impossible that I should be your wife."

"Do you mean that you cannot love me?"

"You have no right to press me any further," she said; and sat down upon the sofa, with an angry frown upon her forehead.

"By heavens," he said, "I will take no such answer from you till you put your hand upon your heart, and say that you cannot love me."

"Oh, why should you press me so, Lord Lufton?"

"Why;—because my happiness depends upon it; because it behoves me to know the very truth. It has come to this, that I love you with my whole heart, and I must know how your heart stands towards me." She had now again risen from the sofa, and was looking steadily in his face.

"Lord Lufton, I cannot love you."

"Lord Lufton, I cannot love you."

"Lord Lufton," she said, "I cannot love you," and as she spoke she did put her hand, as he had desired, upon her heart.

"Then God help me! for I am wretched. Good-bye, Lucy," and he stretched out his hand to her.

"Good-bye, my lord. Do not be angry with me."

"No, no, no!" and without further speech he left the room and the house and hurried home. It was hardly surprising that he should that evening tell his mother that Griselda Grantly would be a companion sufficiently good for his sister. He wanted no such companion.

And when he was well gone,—absolutely out of sight from the window,—Lucy walked steadily up to her room, locked the door, and then threw herself on the bed. Why,—oh! why had she told such a falsehood? Could anything justify her in a lie? Was it not a lie,—knowing as she did that she loved him with all her loving heart? But, then, his mother! and the sneers of the world, which would have declared that she had set her trap, and caught the foolish young lord! Her pride would not have submitted to that. Strong as her love was, yet her pride was, perhaps, stronger;—stronger at any rate during that interview. But how was she to forgive herself the falsehood she had told?

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. PROUDIE'S CONVERSAZIONE.

It was grievous to think of the mischief and danger into which Griselda Grantly was brought by the worldliness of her mother in those few weeks previous to Lady Lufton's arrival in town,—very grievous, at least, to her ladyship, as from time to time she heard of what was done in London. Lady Hartletop's was not the only objectionable house at which Griselda was allowed to reap fresh fashionable laurels. It had been stated openly in the Morning Post that that young lady had been the most admired among the beautiful at one of Miss Dunstable's celebrated soirées, and then she was heard of as gracing the drawing-room at Mrs. Proudie's conversazione.

Of Miss Dunstable herself Lady Lufton was not able openly to allege any evil. She was acquainted, Lady Lufton knew, with very many people of the right sort, and was the dear friend of Lady Lufton's highly conservative and not very distant neighbours, the Greshams. But then she was also acquainted with so many people of the bad sort! Indeed, she was intimate with everybody, from the Duke of Omnium to old Dowager Lady Goodygaffer, who had represented all the cardinal virtues for the last quarter of a century. She smiled with equal sweetness on treacle and on

brimstone; was quite at home at Exeter Hall, having been consulted,—so the world said, probably not with exact truth,—as to the selection of more than one disagreeably low church bishop; and was not less frequent in her attendance at the ecclesiastical doings of a certain terrible prelate in the Midland counties, who was supposed to favour stoles and vespers, and to have no proper Protestant hatred for auricular confession and fish on Fridays. Lady Lufton, who was very staunch, did not like this, and would say of Miss Dunstable that it was impossible to serve both God and Mammon. But Mrs. Proudie was much more objectionable to her. Seeing how sharp was the feud between the Proudies and the Grantlys down in Barsetshire, how absolutely unable they had always been to carry a decent face towards each other in church matters, how they headed two parties in the diocese, which were, when brought together, as oil and vinegar, in which battles the whole Lufton influence had always been brought to bear on the Grantly side;—seeing all this, I say, Lady Lufton was surprised to hear that Griselda had been taken to Mrs. Proudie's evening exhibition. "Had the archdeacon been consulted about it," she said to herself, "this would never have happened." But there she was wrong, for in matters concerning his daughter's introduction to the world the archdeacon never interfered.

On the whole, I am inclined to think that Mrs. Grantly understood the world better than did Lady Lufton. In her heart of hearts Mrs. Grantly hated Mrs. Proudie,—that is, with that sort of hatred one Christian lady allows herself to feel towards another. Of course Mrs. Grantly forgave Mrs. Proudie all her

offences, and wished her well, and was at peace with her, in the Christian sense of the word, as with all other women. But under this forbearance and meekness, and perhaps, we may say, wholly unconnected with it, there was certainly a current of antagonistic feeling which, in the ordinary unconsidered language of every day, men and women do call hatred. This raged and was strong thoughout the whole year in Barsetshire, before the eyes of all mankind. But, nevertheless, Mrs. Grantly took Griselda to Mrs. Proudie's evening parties in London. In these days Mrs. Proudie considered herself to be by no means the least among bishops' wives. She had opened the season this year in a new house in Gloucester Place, at which the reception rooms, at any rate, were all that a lady bishop could desire. Here she had a front drawing-room of very noble dimensions, a second drawing-room rather noble also, though it had lost one of its back corners awkwardly enough, apparently in a jostle with the neighbouring house; and then there was a third,—shall we say drawing-room, or closet?—in which Mrs. Proudie delighted to be seen sitting, in order that the world might know that there was a third room; altogether a noble suite, as Mrs. Proudie herself said in confidence to more than one clergyman's wife from Barsetshire. "A noble suite, indeed, Mrs. Proudie!" the clergymen's wives from Barsetshire would usually answer.

For some time Mrs. Proudie was much at a loss to know by what sort of party or entertainment she would make herself famous. Balls and suppers were of course out of the question. She did not object to her daughters dancing all night at other houses;—at least,

of late she had not objected, for the fashionable world required it, and the young ladies had perhaps a will of their own;—but dancing at her own house, absolutely under the shade of the bishop's apron, would be a sin and a scandal. And then as to suppers,—of all modes in which one may extend one's hospitality to a large acquaintance, they are the most costly. "It is horrid to think that we should go out among our friends for the mere sake of eating and drinking," Mrs. Proudie would say to the clergymen's wives from Barsetshire. "It shows such a sensual propensity."

"Indeed it does, Mrs. Proudie; and is so vulgar too!" those ladies would reply. But the elder among them would remember with regret the unsparing, open-handed hospitality of Barchester Palace in the good old days of Bishop Grantly,—God rest his soul! One old vicar's wife there was whose answer had not been so courteous. "When we are hungry, Mrs. Proudie," she had said, "we do all have sensual propensities."

"It would be much better, Mrs. Athill, if the world would provide for all that at home," Mrs. Proudie had rapidly replied;—with which opinion I must here profess that I cannot by any means bring myself to coincide. But a conversazione would give play to no sensual propensity, nor occasion that intolerable expense which the gratification of sensual propensities too often produces. Mrs. Proudie felt that the word was not all that she could have desired. It was a little faded by old use and present oblivion, and seemed to address itself to that portion of the London world that is considered blue, rather than fashionable. But, nevertheless, there was a spirituality about it which suited her, and one may also say an economy. And then as re

garded fashion, it might perhaps not be beyond the power of a Mrs. Proudie to regild the word with a newly burnished gilding. Some leading person must produce fashion at first hand, and why not Mrs. Proudie?

Her plan was to set the people by the ears talking, if talk they would, or to induce them to show themselves there inert if no more could be got from them; to accommodate with chairs and sofas as many as the furniture of her noble suite of rooms would allow, especially with the two chairs and padded bench against the wall in the back closet,—the small inner drawing-room, as she would call it to the clergymen's wives from Barsetshire,—and to let the others stand about upright, or "group themselves," as she described it. Then four times during the two hours' period of her conversazione tea and cake were to be handed round on salvers. It is astonishing how far a very little cake will go in this way, particularly if administered tolerably early after dinner. The men can't eat it, and the women, having no plates and no table, are obliged to abstain. Mrs. Jones knows that she cannot hold a piece of crumbly cake in her hand till it be consumed without doing serious injury to her best dress. When Mrs. Proudie, with her weekly books before her, looked into the financial upshot of her conversazione, her conscience told her that she had done the right thing. Going out to tea is not a bad thing, if one can contrive to dine early, and then be allowed to sit round a big table with a tea urn in the middle. I would, however, suggest that breakfast cups should always be provided for the gentlemen. And then with pleasant neighbours,—or more especially with a pleasant neigh-

bour,—the affair is not, according to my taste, by any means the worst phase of society. But I do dislike that handing round, unless it be of a subsidiary thimbleful of the best cognac when the business of the social intercourse has been dinner.

And indeed this handing round has become a vulgar and an intolerable nuisance among us second-class gentry with our eight hundred a year,—there or thereabouts;—doubly intolerable as being destructive of our natural comforts, and a wretchedly vulgar aping of men with large incomes. The Duke of Omnium and Lady Hartletop are undoubtedly wise to have everything handed round. Friends of mine who occasionally dine at such houses tell me that they get their wine quite as quickly as they can drink it, that their mutton is brought to them without delay, and that the potato bearer follows quick upon the heels of carnifer. Nothing can be more comfortable, and we may no doubt acknowledge that these first-class grandees do understand their material comforts. But we of the eight hundred can no more come up to them in this than we can in their opera-boxes and equipages. May I not say that the usual tether of this class, in the way of carnifers, cup-bearers, and the rest, does not reach beyond neat-handed Phyllis and the greengrocer? and that Phyllis, neat-handed as she probably is, and the greengrocer, though he be ever so active, cannot administer a dinner to twelve people who are prohibited by a Medo-Persian law from all self-administration whatever? And may I not further say that the lamentable consequence to us eight hundreders dining out among each other is this, that we too often get no dinner at all? Phyllis, with the potatoes, cannot reach

us till our mutton is devoured, or in a lukewarm state past our power of managing; and Ganymede, the greengrocer, though we admire the skill of his necktie and the whiteness of his unexceptionable gloves, fails to keep us going in sherry. Seeing a lady the other day in this strait, left without a small modicum of stimulus which was no doubt necessary for her good digestion, I ventured to ask her to drink wine with me. But when I bowed my head at her, she looked at me with all her eyes, struck with amazement. Had I suggested that she should join me in a wild Indian war dance, with nothing on but my paint, her face could not have shown greater astonishment. And yet I should have thought she might have remembered the days when Christian men and women used to drink wine with each other. God be with the good old days when I could hobnob with my friend over the table as often as I was inclined to lift my glass to my lips, and make a long arm for a hot potato whenever the exigencies of my plate required it.

I think it may be laid down as a rule in affairs of hospitality that whatever extra luxury or grandeur we introduce at our tables when guests are with us should be introduced for the advantage of the guest and not for our own. If, for instance, our dinner be served in a manner different from that usual to us, it should be so served in order that our friends may with more satisfaction eat our repast than our everyday practice would produce on them. But the change should by no means be made to their material detriment in order that our fashion may be acknowledged. Again, if I decorate my sideboard and table, wishing that the eyes of my visitors may rest on that which is elegant and pleasant

to the sight, I act in that matter with a becoming sense of hospitality; but if my object be to kill Mrs. Jones with envy at the sight of my silver trinkets, I am a very mean-spirited fellow. This, in a broad way, will be acknowledged; but if we would bear in mind the same idea at all times,—on occasions when the way perhaps may not be so broad, when more thinking may be required to ascertain what is true hospitality, —I think we of the eight hundred would make a greater advance towards really entertaining our own friends than by any rearrangement of the actual meats and dishes which we set before them.

Knowing, as we do, that the terms of the Lufton-Grantly alliance had been so solemnly ratified between the two mothers, it is perhaps hardly open to us to suppose that Mrs. Grantly was induced to take her daughter to Mrs. Proudie's by any knowledge which she may have acquired that Lord Dumbello had promised to grace the bishop's assembly. It is certainly the fact that high contracting parties do sometimes allow themselves a latitude which would be considered dishonest by contractors of a lower sort; and it may be possible that the archdeacon's wife did think of that second string with which her bow was furnished. Be that as it may, Lord Dumbello was at Mrs. Proudie's, and it did so come to pass that Griselda was seated at the corner of a sofa close to which was a vacant space in which his lordship could—"group himself." They had not been long there before Lord Dumbello did group himself. "Fine day," he said, coming up and occupying the vacant position by Miss Grantly's elbow.

"We were driving to-day, and we thought it rather cold," said Griselda.

"Deuced cold," said Lord Dumbello, and then he adjusted his white cravat and touched up his whiskers. Having got so far, he did not proceed to any other immediate conversational efforts; nor did Griselda. But he grouped himself again as became a marquis, and gave very intense satisfaction to Mrs. Proudie.

"This is so kind of you, Lord Dumbello," said that lady, coming up to him and shaking his hand warmly; "so very kind of you to come to my poor little tea-party."

"Uncommonly pleasant, I call it," said his lordship. "I like this sort of thing;—no trouble, you know."

"No; that is the charm of it, is n't it? no trouble, or fuss, or parade. That 's what I always say. According to my ideas, society consists in giving people facility for an interchange of thoughts,—what we call conversation."

"Aw, yes, exactly."

"Not in eating and drinking together;—eh, Lord Dumbello? And yet the practice of our lives would seem to show that the indulgence of those animal propensities can alone suffice to bring people together. The world in this has surely made a great mistake."

"I like a good dinner all the same," said Lord Dumbello.

"Oh, yes, of course;—of course. I am by no means one of those who would pretend to preach that our tastes have not been given to us for our enjoyment. Why should things be nice if we are not to like them?"

"A man who can really give a good dinner has learned a great deal," said Lord Dumbello, with unusual animation.

"An immense deal. It is quite an art in itself: and

one which I, at any rate, by no means despise. But we cannot always be eating;—can we?"

"No," said Lord Dumbello, "not always." And he looked as though he lamented that his powers should be so circumscribed.

Then Mrs. Proudie passed on to Mrs. Grantly. The two ladies were quite friendly in London; though down in their own neighbourhood they waged a war so internecine in its nature. But nevertheless Mrs. Proudie's manner might have shown to a very close observer that she knew the difference between a bishop and an archdeacon. "I am so delighted to see you," said she. "No, don't mind moving; I won't sit down just at present. But why did n't the archdeacon come?"

"It was quite impossible; it was indeed," said Mrs. Grantly. "The archdeacon never has a moment in London that he can call his own."

"You don't stay up very long, I believe."

"A good deal longer than we either of us like, I can assure you. London life is a perfect nuisance to me."

"But people in a certain position must go through with it, you know," said Mrs. Proudie. "The bishop, for instance, must attend the House."

"Must he?" asked Mrs. Grantly, as though she were not at all well informed with reference to this branch of a bishop's business. "I am very glad that archdeacons are under no such liability."

"Oh, no; there 's nothing of that sort," said Mrs. Proudie, very seriously. "But how uncommonly well Miss Grantly is looking! I do hear that she has quite been admired." This phrase certainly was a little hard for the mother to bear. All the world had ac-

knowledged, so Mrs. Grantly had taught herself to believe, that Griselda was undoubtedly the beauty of the season. Marquises and lords were already contending for her smiles, and paragraphs had been written in newspapers as to her profile. It was too hard to be told, after that, that her daughter had been "quite admired." Such a phrase might suit a pretty little red-cheeked milkmaid of a girl.

"She cannot, of course, come near your girls in that respect," said Mrs. Grantly, very quietly. Now the Miss Proudies had not elicited from the fashionable world any very loud encomiums on their beauty. Their mother felt the taunt in its fullest force, but she would not essay to do battle on the present arena. She jotted down the item in her mind, and kept it over for Barchester and the chapter. Such debts as those she usually paid on some day, if the means of doing so were at all within her power. "But there is Miss Dunstable, I declare," she said, seeing that that lady had entered the room; and away went Mrs. Proudie to welcome her distinguished guest.

"And so this is a conversazione, is it?" said that lady, speaking, as usual, not in a suppressed voice. "Well, I declare, it 's very nice. It means conversation, don't it, Mrs. Proudie?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Miss Dunstable, there is nobody like you, I declare."

"Well, but don't it? and tea and cake? and then, when we 're tired of talking, we go away,—is n't that it?"

"But you must not be tired for these three hours yet."

"Oh, I am never tired of talking; all the world

knows that. How do, bishop? A very nice sort of thing this conversazione, is n't it now?" The bishop rubbed his hands together and smiled, and said that he thought it was rather nice.

"Mrs. Proudie is so fortunate in all her little arrangements," said Miss Dunstable.

"Yes, yes," said the bishop. "I think she is happy in these matters. I do flatter myself that she is so. Of course, Miss Dunstable, you are accustomed to things on a much grander scale."

"I! Lord bless you, no! Nobody hates grandeur so much as I do. Of course I must do as I am told. I must live in a big house, and have three footmen six feet high. I must have a coachman with a top-heavy wig, and horses so big that they frighten me. If I did not, I should be made out a lunatic and declared unable to manage my own affairs. But as for grandeur, I hate it. I certainly think that I shall have some of these conversaziones. I wonder whether Mrs. Proudie will come and put me up to a wrinkle or two." The bishop again rubbed his hands, and said that he was sure she would. He never felt quite at his ease with Miss Dunstable, as he rarely could ascertain whether or no she was earnest in what she was saying. So he trotted off, muttering some excuse as he went, and Miss Dunstable chuckled with an inward chuckle at his too evident bewilderment. Miss Dunstable was by nature kind, generous, and open-hearted; but she was living now very much with people on whom kindness, generosity, and open-heartedness were thrown away. She was clever also, and could be sarcastic; and she found that those qualities told better in the world around her than generosity and an open heart. And

so she went on from month to month, and year to year, not progressing in a good spirit as she might have done, but still carrying within her bosom a warm affection for those she could really love. And she knew that she was hardly living as she should live,—that the wealth which she affected to despise was eating into the soundness of her character, not by its splendour, but by the style of life which it had seemed to produce as a necessity. She knew that she was gradually becoming irreverent, scornful, and prone to ridicule; but yet, knowing this, and hating it, she hardly knew how to break from it. She had seen so much of the blacker side of human nature that blackness no longer startled her as it should do. She had been the prize at which so many ruined spendthrifts had aimed; so many pirates had endeavoured to run her down while sailing in the open waters of life, that she had ceased to regard such attempts on her money-bags as unmanly or over-covetous. She was content to fight her own battle with her own weapons, feeling secure in her own strength of purpose and strength of wit.

Some few friends she had whom she really loved,—among whom her inner self could come out and speak boldly what it had to say with its own true voice. And the woman who thus so spoke was very different from that Miss Dunstable whom Mrs. Proudie courted, and the Duke of Omnium fêted, and Mrs. Harold Smith claimed as her bosom friend. If only she could find among such one special companion on whom her heart might rest, who would help her to bear the heavy burdens of her world! But where was she to find such a friend;—she with her keen wit, her untold money, and loud, laughing voice? Everything about her was cal-

culated to attract those whom she could not value, and to scare from her the sort of friend to whom she would fain have linked her lot. And then she met Mrs. Harold Smith, who had taken Mrs. Proudie's noble suite of rooms in her tour for the evening, and was devoting to them a period of twenty minutes. "And so I may congratulate you," Miss Dunstable said eagerly to her friend.

"No, in mercy's name, do no such thing, or you may too probably have to uncongratulate me again; and that will be so unpleasant."

"But they told me that Lord Brock had sent for him yesterday." Now at this period Lord Brock was prime minister.

"So he did, and Harold was with him backwards and forwards all the day. But he can't shut his eyes and open his mouth, and see what God will send him, as a wise and prudent man should do. He is always for bargaining, and no prime minister likes that."

"I would not be in his shoes if, after all, he has to come home and say that the bargain is off."

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, I should not take it very quietly. But what can we poor women do, you know? When it is settled, my dear, I 'll send you a line at once." And then Mrs. Harold Smith finished her course round the rooms, and regained her carriage within the twenty minutes.

"Beautiful profile, has she not?" said Miss Dunstable, somewhat later in the evening, to Mrs. Proudie. Of course, the profile spoken of belonged to Miss Grantly.

"Yes, it is beautiful, certainly," said Mrs. Proudie "The pity is that it means nothing."

"The gentlemen seem to think that it means a good deal."

"I am not sure of that. She has no conversation, you see; not a word. She has been sitting there with Lord Dumbello at her elbow for the last hour, and yet she has hardly opened her mouth three times."

"But, my dear Mrs. Proudie, who on earth could talk to Lord Dumbello?" Mrs. Proudie thought that her own daughter Olivia would undoubtedly be able to do so, if only she could get the opportunity. But, then, Olivia had so much conversation. And while the two ladies were yet looking at the youthful pair, Lord Dumbello did speak again. "I think I have had enough of this now," said he, addressing himself to Griselda.

"I suppose you have other engagements," said she.

"Oh, yes; and I believe I shall go to Lady Clantelbrock's." And then he took his departure. No other word was spoken that evening between him and Miss Grantly beyond those given in this chronicle, and yet the world declared that he and that young lady had passed the evening in so close a flirtation as to make the matter more than ordinarily particular; and Mrs. Grantly, as she was driven home to her lodgings, began to have doubts in her mind whether it would be wise to discountenance so great an alliance as that which the head of the great Hartletop family now seemed desirous to establish. The prudent mother had not yet spoken a word to her daughter on these subjects, but it might soon become necessary to do so. It was all very well for Lady Lufton to hurry up to town, but of what service would that be if Lord Lufton were not to be found in Bruton Street?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEW MINISTER'S PATRONAGE.

At that time, just as Lady Lufton was about to leave Framley for London, Mark Robarts received a pressing letter, inviting him also to go up to the metropolis for a day or two,—not for pleasure, but on business. The letter was from his indefatigable friend Sowerby. "My dear Robarts," the letter ran;—"I have just heard that poor little Burslem, the Barsetshire prebendary, is dead. We must all die some day, you know,—as you have told your parishioners from the Framley pulpit more than once, no doubt. The stall must be filled up, and why should not you have it as well as another? It is six hundred a year and a house. Little Burslem had nine, but the good old times are gone. Whether the house is letable or not under the present ecclesiastical régime, I do not know. It used to be so, for I remember Mrs. Wiggins, the tallow-chandler's widow, living in old Stanhope's house.

"Harold Smith has just joined the government as Lord Petty Bag, and could, I think, at the present moment, get this for asking. He cannot well refuse me, and if you will say the word, I will speak to him. You had better come up yourself; but say the word 'Yes,' or 'No,' by the wires.

"If you say 'Yes,' as of course you will, do not fail

to come up. You will find me at the 'Travellers,' or at the House. The stall will just suit you,—will give you no trouble, will improve your position, and give some little assistance towards bed and board, and rack and manger. Yours ever faithfully,

"N. SOWERBY.

"Singularly enough, I hear that your brother is private secretary to the new Lord Petty Bag. I am told that his chief duty will consist in desiring the servants to call my sister's carriage. I have only seen Harold once since he accepted office; but my Lady Petty Bag says that he has certainly grown an inch since that occurrence."

This was certainly very good-natured on the part of Mr. Sowerby, and showed that he had a feeling within his bosom that he owed something to his friend the parson for the injury he had done him. And such was in truth the case. A more reckless being than the member for West Barsetshire could not exist. He was reckless for himself, and reckless for all others with whom he might be concerned. He could ruin his friends with as little remorse as he had ruined himself. All was fair game that came in the way of his net. But, nevertheless, he was good-natured, and willing to move heaven and earth to do a friend a good turn, if it came in his way to do so. He did really love Mark Robarts as much as it was given him to love any among his acquaintance. He knew that he had already done him an almost irreparable injury, and might very probably injure him still deeper before he had done with him. That he would undoubtedly do so, if it came in his way, was very certain. But then, if it also

came in his way to repay his friend by any side blow, he would also undoubtedly do that. Such an occasion had now come, and he had desired his sister to give the new Lord Petty Bag no rest till he should have promised to use all his influence in getting the vacant prebend for Mark Robarts.

This letter of Sowerby's Mark immediately showed to his wife. How lucky, thought he to himself, that not a word was said in it about those accursed money transactions! Had he understood Sowerby better he would have known that that gentleman never said anything about money transactions until it became absolutely necessary. "I know you don't like Mr. Sowerby," he said; "but you must own that this is very good-natured."

"It is the character I hear of him that I don't like," said Mrs. Robarts.

"But what shall I do now, Fanny? As he says, why should not I have the stall as well as another?"

"I suppose it would not interfere with your parish?" she asked.

"Not in the least, at the distance at which we are. I did think of giving up old Jones; but if I take this, of course I must keep a curate." His wife could not find it in her heart to dissuade him from accepting promotion when it came in his way. What vicar's wife would have so persuaded her husband? But yet she did not altogether like it. She feared that Greek from Chaldicotes, even when he came with the present of a prebendal stall in his hands. And then what would Lady Lufton say?

"And do you think that you must go up to London, Mark?"

"Oh, certainly; that is, if I intend to accept Harold Smith's kind offices in the matter."

"I suppose it would be better to accept them," said Fanny, feeling, perhaps, that it would be useless in her to hope that they should not be accepted.

"Prebendal stalls, Fanny, don't generally go begging long among parish clergymen. How could I reconcile it to the duty I owe to my children to refuse such an increase to my income?" And so it was settled that he should at once drive to Silverbridge and send off a message by telegraph, and that he should himself proceed to London on the following day. "But you must see Lady Lufton first, of course," said Fanny, as soon as all this was settled. Mark would have avoided this if he could have decently done so, but he felt that it would be impolitic, as well as indecent. And why should he be afraid to tell Lady Lufton that he hoped to receive this piece of promotion from the present government? There was nothing disgraceful in a clergyman becoming a prebendary of Barchester. Lady Lufton herself had always been very civil to the prebendaries, and especially to little Dr. Burslem, the meagre little man who had just now paid the debt of nature. She had always been very fond of the chapter, and her original dislike to Bishop Proudie had been chiefly founded on his interference with the cathedral clergy, —on his interference, or on that of his wife or chaplain. Considering these things, Mark Robarts tried to make himself believe that Lady Lufton would be delighted at his good fortune. But yet he did not believe it. She at any rate would revolt from the gift of the Greek of Chaldicotes. "Oh, indeed," she said, when the vicar had with some difficulty explained to

her all the circumstances of the case. "Well, I congratulate you, Mr. Robarts, on your powerful new patron."

"You will probably feel with me, Lady Lufton, that the benefice is one which I can hold without any detriment to me in my position here at Framley," said he, prudently resolving to let the slur upon his friends pass by unheeded.

"Well, I hope so. Of course, you are a very young man, Mr. Robarts, and these things have generally been given to clergymen more advanced in life."

"But you do not mean to say that you think I ought to refuse it?"

"What my advice to you might be if you really came to me for advice, I am hardly prepared to say at so very short a notice. You seem to have made up your mind, and therefore I need not consider it. As it is, I wish you joy, and hope that it may turn out to your advantage in every way."

"You understand, Lady Lufton, that I have by no means got it as yet."

"Oh, I thought it had been offered to you. I thought you spoke of this new minister as having all that in his own hand."

"Oh, dear, no. What may be the amount of his influence in that respect I do not at all know. But my correspondent assures me——"

"Mr. Sowerby, you mean. Why don't you call him by his name?"

"Mr. Sowerby assures me that Mr. Smith will ask for it; and thinks it most probable that his request will be successful."

"Oh, of course. Mr. Sowerby and Mr. Harold

Smith together would no doubt be successful in anything. They are the sort of men who are successful now-a-days. Well, Mr. Robarts, I wish you joy." And she gave him her hand in token of her sincerity. Mark took her hand, resolving to say nothing further on that occasion. That Lady Lufton was not now cordial with him as she used to be he was well aware; and sooner or later he was determined to have the matter out with her. He would ask her why she now so constantly met him with a taunt, and so seldom greeted him with that kind old affectionate smile which he knew and appreciated so well. That she was honest and true he was quite sure. If he asked her the question plainly, she would answer him openly. And if he could induce her to say that she would return to her old ways, return to them she would in a hearty manner. But he could not do this just at present. It was but a day or two since Mr. Crawley had been with him; and was it not probable that Mr. Crawley had been sent thither by Lady Lufton? His own hands were not clean enough for a remonstrance at the present moment. He would cleanse them, and then he would remonstrate. "Would you like to live part of the year in Barchester?" he said to his wife and sister that evening.

"I think that two houses are only a trouble," said his wife. "And we have been very happy here."

"I have always liked a cathedral town," said Lucy; "and I am particularly fond of the close."

"And Barchester close is the closest of all closes," said Mark. "There is not a single house within the gateways that does not belong to the chapter."

"But if we are to keep up two houses, the additional income will soon be wasted," said Fanny, prudently.

"The thing would be to let the house furnished every summer," said Lucy.

"But I must take my residence as the terms come," said the vicar; "and I certainly should not like to be away from Framley all the winter; I should never see anything of Lufton." And perhaps he thought of his hunting, and then thought again of that cleansing of his hands.

"I should not a bit mind being away during the winter," said Lucy, thinking of what the last winter had done for her.

"But where on earth should we find money to furnish one of those large, old-fashioned houses? Pray, Mark, do not do anything rash." And the wife laid her hand affectionately on her husband's arm. In this manner the question of the prebend was discussed between them on the evening before he started for London. Success had at last crowned the earnest effort with which Harold Smith had carried on the political battle of his life for the last ten years. The late Lord Petty Bag had resigned in disgust, having been unable to digest the prime minister's ideas on Indian Reform, and Mr. Harold Smith, after sundry hitches in the business, was installed in his place. It was said that Harold Smith was not exactly the man whom the premier would himself have chosen for that high office; but the premier's hands were a good deal tied by circumstances. The last great appointment he had made had been terribly unpopular,—so much so as to subject him, popular as he undoubtedly was himself, to a screech from all the nation. The Jupiter, with withering scorn, had asked whether vice of every kind was to be considered, in these days of Queen Victoria, as

a passport to the Cabinet. Adverse members of both Houses had arrayed themselves in a pure panoply of morality, and thundered forth their sarcasms with the indignant virtue and keen discontent of political Juvenals; and even his own friends had held up their hands in dismay. Under these circumstances he had thought himself obliged in the present instance to select a man who would not be especially objectionable to any party. Now Harold Smith lived with his wife, and his circumstances were not more than ordinarily embarrassed. He kept no race-horses; and, as Lord Brock now heard for the first time, gave lectures in provincial towns on popular subjects. He had a seat which was tolerably secure, and could talk to the House by the yard if required to do so. Moreover, Lord Brock had a great idea that the whole machinery of his own ministry would break to pieces very speedily. His own reputation was not bad, but it was insufficient for himself and that lately selected friend of his. Under all these circumstances combined, he chose Harold Smith to fill the vacant office of Lord Petty Bag. And very proud the Lord Petty Bag was. For the last three or four months, he and Mr. Supplehouse had been agreeing to consign the ministry to speedy perdition. "This sort of dictatorship will never do," Harold Smith had himself said, justifying that future vote of his as to want of confidence in the Queen's government. And Mr. Supplehouse in this matter had fully agreed with him. He was a Juno whose form that wicked old Paris had utterly despised, and he, too, had quite made up his mind as to the lobby in which he would be found when that day of vengeance should arrive. But now things were much altered in Harold Smith's views. The pre-

mier had shown his wisdom in seeking for new strength where strength ought to be sought, and introducing new blood into the body of his ministry. The people would now feel fresh confidence, and probably the House also. As to Mr. Supplehouse;—he would use all his influence on Supplehouse. But, after all, Mr. Supplehouse was not everything.

On the morning after our vicar's arrival in London he attended at the Petty Bag Office. It was situated in the close neighbourhood of Downing Street and the higher governmental gods; and though the building itself was not much, seeing that it was shored up on one side, that it bulged out in the front, was foul with smoke, dingy with dirt, and was devoid of any single architectural grace or modern scientific improvement, nevertheless its position gave it a status in the world which made the clerks in the Lord Petty Bag's office quite respectable in their walk in life. Mark had seen his friend Sowerby on the previous evening, and had then made an appointment with him for the following morning at the new minister's office. And now he was there a little before his time, in order that he might have a few moments' chat with his brother. When Mark found himself in the private secretary's room he was quite astonished to see the change in his brother's appearance which the change in his official rank had produced. Jack Robarts had been a well-built, straight-legged, lissome young fellow, pleasant to the eye because of his natural advantages, but rather given to a harum-skarum style of gait, and occasionally careless, not to say slovenly, in his dress. But now he was the very pink of perfection. His jaunty frock-coat fitted him to perfection; not a hair of his head was out of

place; his waistcoat and trousers were glossy and new, and his umbrella, which stood in the umbrella-stand in the corner, was tight, and neat, and small, and natty. "Well, John, you 've become quite a great man," said his brother.

"I don't know much about that," said John; "but I find that I have an enormous deal of fagging to go through."

"Do you mean work? I thought you had about the easiest berth in the whole Civil Service."

"Ah! that 's just the mistake that people make. Because we don't cover whole reams of foolscap paper at the rate of fifteen lines to a page, and five words to a line, people think that we private secretaries have got nothing to do. Look here," and he tossed over scornfully a dozen or so of little notes. "I tell you what, Mark; it is no easy matter to manage the patronage of a Cabinet minister. Now I am bound to write to every one of these fellows a letter that will please him; and yet I shall refuse to every one of them the request which he asks."

"That must be difficult."

"Difficult is no word for it. But, after all, it consists chiefly in the knack of the thing. One may have the wit

> 'From such a sharp and waspish word as "no"
> To pluck the sting.'

I do it every day, and I really think that the people like it."

"Perhaps your refusals are better than other people's acquiescences."

"I don't mean that at all. We private secretaries

have all to do the same thing. Now, would you believe it? I have used up three lifts of note-paper already in telling people that there is no vacancy for a lobby messenger in the Petty Bag Office. Seven peeresses have asked for it for their favourite footmen. But there;—there 's the Lord Petty Bag!" A bell rang, and the private secretary, jumping up from his note-paper, tripped away quickly to the great man's room. "He 'll see you at once," said he, returning. "Buggins, show the Reverend Mr. Robarts to the Lord Petty Bag." Buggins was the messenger for whose not vacant place all the peeresses were striving with so much animation. And then Mark, following Buggins for two steps, was ushered into the next room.

If a man be altered by becoming a private secretary, he is much more altered by being made a Cabinet minister. Robarts, as he entered the room, could hardly believe that this was the same Harold Smith whom Mrs. Proudie bothered so cruelly in the lecture-room at Barchester. Then he was cross, and touchy, and uneasy, and insignificant. Now, as he stood smiling on the hearthrug of his official fireplace, it was quite pleasant to see the kind, patronizing smile which lighted up his features. He delighted to stand there, with his hands in his trousers' pocket, the great man of the place, conscious of his lordship, and feeling himself every inch a minister. Sowerby was with him, and was standing a little in the background, from which position he winked occasionally at the parson over the minister's shoulder. "Ah, Robarts, delighted to see you. How odd, by-the-bye, that your brother should be my private secretary!" Mark said that it was a singular coincidence.

"A very smart young fellow, and, if he minds himself, he 'll do well."

"I 'm quite sure he 'll do well," said Mark.

"Ah! well, yes; I think he will. And now, what can I do for you, Robarts?" Hereupon Mr. Sowerby struck in, making it apparent by his explanation that Mr. Robarts himself by no means intended to ask for anything; but that, as his friends had thought that this stall at Barchester might be put into his hands with more fitness than into those of any other clergyman of the day, he was willing to accept the piece of preferment from a man whom he respected so much as he did the new Lord Petty Bag. The minister did not quite like this, as it restricted him from much of his condescension, and robbed him of the incense of a petition which he had expected Mark Robarts would make to him. But, nevertheless, he was very gracious. "He could not take upon himself to declare," he said, "what might be Lord Brock's pleasure with reference to the preferment at Barchester which was vacant. He had certainly already spoken to his lordship on the subject, and had perhaps some reason to believe that his own wishes would be consulted. No distinct promise had been made, but he might perhaps go so far as to say that he expected such result. If so, it would give him the greatest pleasure in the world to congratulate Mr. Robarts on the possession of the stall, —a stall which he was sure Mr. Robarts would fill with dignity, piety, and brotherly love." And then, when he had finished, Mr. Sowerby gave a final wink, and said that he regarded the matter as settled.

"No, not settled, Nathaniel," said the cautious minister.

"It 's the same thing," rejoined Sowerby. "We all know what all that flummery means. Men in office, Mark, never do make a distinct promise,—not even to themselves of the leg of mutton which is roasting before their kitchen fires. It is so necessary in these days to be safe; is it not, Harold?"

"Most expedient," said Harold Smith, shaking his head wisely. "Well, Robarts, who is it now?" This he said to his private secretary, who came to notice the arrival of some big-wig. "Well, yes. I will say good-morning, with your leave, for I am a little hurried. And remember, Mr. Robarts, I will do what I can for you; but you must distinctly understand that there is no promise."

"Oh, no promise at all," said Sowerby;—"of course not." And then, as he sauntered up Whitehall towards Charing Cross, with Robarts on his arm, he again pressed upon him the sale of that invaluable hunter, who was eating his head off his shoulders in the stable at Chaldicotes.

CHAPTER XIX.

MONEY DEALINGS.

Mr. Sowerby, in his resolution to obtain this good gift for the vicar of Framley, did not depend quite alone on the influence of his near connection with the Lord Petty Bag. He felt the occasion to be one on which he might endeavour to move even higher powers than that, and therefore he had opened the matter to the duke,—not by direct application, but through Mr. Fothergill. No man who understood matters ever thought of going direct to the duke in such an affair as that. If one wanted to speak about a woman or a horse or a picture the duke could, on occasions, be affable enough. But through Mr. Fothergill the duke was approached. It was represented, with some cunning, that this buying over of the Framley clergyman from the Lufton side would be a praiseworthy spoiling of the Amalekites. The doing so would give the Omnium interest a hold even in the cathedral close. And then it was known to all men that Mr. Robarts had considerable influence over Lord Lufton himself. So guided, the Duke of Omnium did say two words to the prime minister, and two words from the duke went a great way, even with Lord Brock. The upshot of all this was, that Mark Robarts did get the stall; but he did not hear the tidings of his success till some days after his return to Framley.

Mr. Sowerby did not forget to tell him of the great effort,—the unusual effort, as he of Chaldicotes called it,—which the duke had made on the subject. "I don't know when he has done such a thing before," said Sowerby; "and you may be quite sure of this, he would not have done it now, had you not gone to Gatherum Castle when he asked you. Indeed, Fothergill would have known that it was vain to attempt it. And I 'll tell you what, Mark;—it does not do for me to make little of my own nest, but I truly believe the duke's word will be more efficacious than the Lord Petty Bag's solemn adjuration." Mark, of course, expressed his gratitude in proper terms, and did buy the horse for a hundred and thirty pounds. "He 's as well worth it," said Sowerby, "as any animal that ever stood on four legs; and my only reason for pressing him on you is, that when Tozer's day does come round, I know you will have to stand to us to something about that tune." It did not occur to Mark to ask him why the horse should not be sold to some one else, and the money forthcoming in the regular way. But this would not have suited Mr. Sowerby.

Mark knew that the beast was good, and as he walked to his lodgings was half proud of his new possession. But then, how would he justify it to his wife, or how introduce the animal into his stables without attempting any justification in the matter? And yet, looking to the absolute amount of his income, surely he might feel himself entitled to buy a new horse when it suited him. He wondered what Mr. Crawley would say when he heard of the new purchase. He had lately fallen into a state of much wondering as to what his friends and neighbours should say about him. He

had now been two days in town, and was to go down after breakfast on the following morning, so that he might reach home by Friday afternoon. But on that evening, just as he was going to bed, he was surprised by Lord Lufton coming into the coffee-room at his hotel. He walked in with a hurried step, his face was red, and it was clear that he was very angry. "Robarts," said he, walking up to his friend and taking the hand that was extended to him, "do you know anything about this man Tozer?"

"Tozer;—what Tozer? I have heard Sowerby speak of such a man."

"Of course you have. If I do not mistake you have written to me about him yourself."

"Very probably. I remember Sowerby mentioning the man with reference to your affairs. But why do you ask me?"

"This man has not only written to me, but has absolutely forced his way into my rooms when I was dressing for dinner; and absolutely had the impudence to tell me that if I did not honour some bill which he holds for eight hundred pounds he would proceed against me."

"But you settled all that matter with Sowerby?"

"I did settle it at a very great cost to me. Sooner than have a fuss, I paid him through the nose,—like a fool that I was,—everything that he claimed. This is an absolute swindle, and if it goes on I will expose it as such." Robarts looked round the room, but luckily there was not a soul in it but themselves. "You do not mean to say that Sowerby is swindling you," said the clergyman.

"It looks very like it," said Lord Lufton; "and I

tell you fairly that I am not in a humour to endure any more of this sort of thing. Some years ago I made an ass of myself through that man's fault. But four thousand pounds should have covered the whole of what I really lost. I have now paid more than three times that sum; and, by heavens, I will not pay more without exposing the whole affair!"

"But, Lufton, I do not understand. What is this bill?—has it your name to it?"

"Yes, it has: I 'll not deny my name, and if there be absolute need I will pay it; but, if I do so, my lawyer shall sift it, and it shall go before a jury."

"But I thought all those bills were paid?"

"I left it to Sowerby to get up the old bills when they were renewed, and now one of them that has in truth been already honoured is brought against me." Mark could not but think of the two documents which he himself had signed, and both of which were now undoubtedly in the hands of Tozer, or of some other gentleman of the same profession;—which both might be brought against him, the second as soon as he should have satisfied the first. And then he remembered that Sowerby had said something to him about an outstanding bill, for the filling up of which some trifle must be paid, and of this he reminded Lord Lufton.

"And do you call eight hundred pounds a trifle? If so, I do not."

"They will probably make no such demand as that."

"But I tell you they do make such a demand, and have made it. The man whom I saw, and who told me that he was Tozer's friend, but who was probably

Tozer himself, positively swore to me that he would be obliged to take legal proceedings if the money were not forthcoming within a week or ten days. When I explained to him that it was an old bill that had been renewed, he declared that his friend had given full value for it."

"Sowerby said that you would probably have to pay ten pounds to redeem it. I should offer the man some such sum as that."

"My intention is to offer the man nothing, but to leave the affair in the hands of my lawyer with instructions to him to spare none; neither myself nor any one else. I am not going to allow such a man as Sowerby to squeeze me like an orange."

"But, Lufton, you seem as though you were angry with me."

"No, I am not. But I think it as well to caution you about this man; my transactions with him lately have chiefly been through you, and therefore——"

"But they have only been so through his and your wish; because I have been anxious to oblige you both. I hope you don't mean to say that I am concerned in these bills."

"I know that you are concerned in bills with him."

"Why, Lufton, am I to understand, then, that you are accusing me of having any interest in these transactions which you have called swindling?"

"As far as I am concerned there has been swindling, and there is swindling going on now."

"But you do not answer my question. Do you bring any accusation against me? If so, I agree with you that you had better go to your lawyer."

"I think that is what I shall do."

"Very well. But, upon the whole, I never heard of a more unreasonable man, or of one whose thoughts are more unjust than yours. Solely with the view of assisting you, and solely at your request, I spoke to Sowerby about these money transactions of yours. Then, at his request, which originated out of your request, he using me as his ambassador to you, as you had used me as yours to him, I wrote and spoke to you. And now this is the upshot."

"I bring no accusation against you, Robarts; but I know you have dealings with this man. You have told me so yourself."

"Yes, at his request;—to accommodate him, I have put my name to a bill."

"Only to one?"

"Only to one; and then to that same renewed, or not exactly to that same, but to one which stands for it. The first was for four hundred pounds; the last for five hundred."

"All which you will have to make good, and the world will of course tell you that you have paid that price for this stall at Barchester." This was terrible to be borne. He had heard much lately which had frightened and scared him, but nothing so terrible as this;—nothing which so stunned him, or conveyed to his mind so frightful a reality of misery and ruin. He made no immediate answer, but, standing on the hearthrug with his back to the fire, looked up the whole length of the room. Hitherto his eyes had been fixed upon Lord Lufton's face, but now it seemed to him as though he had but little more to do with Lord Lufton. Lord Lufton and Lord Lufton's mother were neither now to be counted among those who wished

him well. Upon whom indeed could he now count, except that wife of his bosom upon whom he was bringing all this wretchedness? In that moment of agony ideas ran quickly through his brain. He would immediately abandon this preferment at Barchester, of which it might be said with so much colour that he had bought it. He would go to Harold Smith, and say positively that he declined it. Then he would return home and tell his wife all that had occurred;—tell the whole also to Lady Lufton, if that might still be of any service. He would make arrangement for the payment of both those bills as they might be presented, asking no questions as to the justice of the claim, making no complaint to any one, not even to Sowerby. He would put half his income, if half were necessary, into the hands of Forrest the banker, till all was paid. He would sell every horse he had. He would part with his footman and groom, and at any rate strive like a man to get again a firm footing on good ground. Then, at that moment, he loathed with his whole soul the position in which he found himself placed, and his own folly which had placed him there. How could he reconcile it to his conscience that he was there in London with Sowerby and Harold Smith, petitioning for church preferment to a man who should have been altogether powerless in such a matter, buying horses, and arranging about past due bills? He did not reconcile it to his conscience. Mr. Crawley had been right when he told him that he was a castaway.

Lord Lufton, whose anger during the whole interview had been extreme, and who had become more angry the more he talked, had now walked once or twice up and down the room; and as he so walked

the idea did occur to him that he had been unjust. He had come there with the intention of exclaiming against Sowerby, and of inducing Robarts to convey to that gentleman, that if he, Lord Lufton, were made to undergo any further annoyance about this bill, the whole affair should be thrown into the lawyer's hands. But instead of doing this, he had brought an accusation against Robarts. That Robarts had latterly become Sowerby's friend rather than his own in all these horrid money dealings had galled him; and now he had expressed himself in terms much stronger than he had intended to use. "As to you personally, Mark," he said, coming back to the spot on which Robarts was standing, "I do not wish to say anything that shall annoy you."

"You have said quite enough, Lord Lufton."

"You cannot be surprised that I should be angry and indignant at the treatment I have received."

"You might, I think, have separated in your mind those who have wronged you, if there has been such wrong, from those who have only endeavoured to do your will and pleasure for you. That I, as a clergyman, have been very wrong in taking any part whatsoever in these matters, I am well aware. That as a man I have been outrageously foolish in lending my name to Mr. Sowerby, I also know well enough; it is, perhaps, as well that I should be told of this somewhat rudely; but I certainly did not expect the lesson to come from you."

"Well, there has been mischief enough. The question is, what we had better now both do?"

"You have said what you mean to do. You will put the affair into the hands of your lawyer."

"Not with any object of exposing you."

"Exposing me, Lord Lufton! Why, one would think that I had had the handling of your money."

"You will misunderstand me. I think no such thing. But do you not know yourself that if legal steps be taken in this wretched affair, your arrangements with Sowerby will be brought to light?"

"My arrangements with Sowerby will consist in paying, or having to pay, on his account, a large sum of money, for which I have never had and shall never have any consideration whatever."

"And what will be said about this stall at Barchester?"

"After the charge which you brought against me just now I shall decline to accept it." At this moment three or four other gentlemen entered the room, and the conversation between our two friends was stopped. They still remained standing near the fire, but for a few minutes neither of them said anything. Robarts was waiting till Lord Lufton should go away, and Lord Lufton had not yet said that which he had come to say. At last he spoke again, almost in a whisper: "I think it will be best to ask Sowerby to come to my rooms to-morrow, and I think also that you should meet him there."

"I do not see any necessity for my presence," said Robarts. "It seems probable that I shall suffer enough for meddling with your affairs, and I will do so no more."

"Of course, I cannot make you come; but I think it will be only just to Sowerby, and it will be a favour to me." Robarts again walked up and down the room for half-a-dozen times, trying to resolve what it would

most become him to do in the present emergency. If his name were dragged before the courts,—if he should be shown up in the public papers as having been engaged in accommodation bills, that would certainly be ruinous to him. He had already learned from Lord Lufton's innuendoes what he might expect to hear as the public version of his share in these transactions! And then his wife,—how would she bear such exposure? "I will meet Mr. Sowerby at your rooms tomorrow, on one condition," he at last said.

"And what is that?"

"That I receive your positive assurance that I am not suspected by you of having had any pecuniary interest whatever in any money matters with Mr. Sowerby, either as concerns your affairs or those of anybody else."

"I have never suspected you of any such thing. But I have thought that you were compromised with him."

"And so I am. I am liable for these bills. But you ought to have known, and do know, that I have never received a shilling on account of such liability. I have endeavoured to oblige a man whom I regarded first as your friend, and then as my own;—and this has been the result!" Lord Lufton did at last give him the assurance that he desired, as they sat with their heads together over one of the coffee-room tables; and then Robarts promised that he would postpone his return to Framley till the Saturday, so that he might meet Sowerby at Lord Lufton's chambers in the Albany on the following afternoon. As soon as this was arranged Lord Lufton took his leave and went his way.

After that poor Mark had a very uneasy night of it. It was clear enough that Lord Lufton had thought, if he did not still think, that the stall at Barchester was to be given as pecuniary recompense in return for certain money accommodation to be afforded by the nominee to the dispenser of this patronage. Nothing on earth could be worse than this. In the first place it would be simony; and then it would be simony beyond all description mean and simoniacal. The very thought of it filled Mark's soul with horror and dismay. It might be that Lord Lufton's suspicions were now at rest; but others would think the same thing, and their suspicions it would be impossible to allay. Those others would consist of the outer world, which is always so eager to gloat over the detected vice of a clergyman. And then that wretched horse which he had purchased, and the purchase of which should have prohibited him from saying that nothing of value had accrued to him in these transactions with Mr. Sowerby! What was he to do about that? And then of late he had been spending, and had continued to spend, more money than he could well afford. This very journey of his up to London would be most imprudent, if it should become necessary for him to give up the prebend. As to that he had made up his mind;—but then again he unmade it, as men always do in such troubles. That line of conduct which he had laid down for himself in the first moments of his indignation against Lord Lufton, by adopting which he would have to encounter poverty, and ridicule, and discomfort, the annihilation of his high hopes, and the ruin of his ambition,—that, he said to himself over and over again, would now be the best for him. But it is so hard for

us to give up our high hopes, and willingly encounter poverty, ridicule, and discomfort!

On the following morning, however, he boldly walked down to the Petty Bag Office, determined to let Harold Smith know that he was no longer desirous of the Barchester stall. He found his brother there, still writing artistic notes to anxious peeresses on the subject of Buggins's non-vacant situation; but the great man of the place, the Lord Petty Bag himself, was not there. He might probably look in when the House was beginning to sit, perhaps at four or a little after; but he certainly would not be at the office in the morning. The functions of the Lord Petty Bag he was no doubt performing elsewhere. Perhaps he had carried his work home with him,—a practice which the world should know is not uncommon with civil servants of exceeding zeal. Mark did think of opening his heart to his brother, and of leaving his message with him. But his courage failed him, or perhaps it might be more correct to say that his prudence prevented him. It would be better for him, he thought, to tell his wife before he told any one else. So he merely chatted with his brother for half an hour and then left him. The day was very tedious till the hour came at which he was to attend at Lord Lufton's rooms; but at last it did come, and just as the clock struck he turned out of Piccadilly into the Albany. As he was going across the court before he entered the building, he was greeted by a voice just behind him. "As punctual as the big clock on Barchester tower," said Mr. Sowerby. "See what it is to have a summons from a great man, Mr. Prebendary." He turned round and extended his hand mechanically to Mr. Sowerby, and as he looked

at him he thought he had never before seen him so pleasant in appearance, so free from care, and so joyous in demeanour.

"You have heard from Lord Lufton," said Mark, in a voice that was certainly very lugubrious.

"Heard from him! Oh, yes, of course I have heard from him. I 'll tell you what it is, Mark," and he now spoke almost in a whisper as they walked together along the Albany passage, "Lufton is a child in money matters,—a perfect child. The dearest, finest fellow in the world, you know; but a very baby in money matters." And then they entered his lordship's rooms. Lord Lufton's countenance also was lugubrious enough, but this did not in the least abash Sowerby, who walked quickly up to the young lord with his gait perfectly self-possessed and his face radiant with satisfaction.

"Well, Lufton, how are you?" said he. "It seems that my worthy friend Tozer has been giving you some trouble?" Then Lord Lufton with a face by no means radiant with satisfaction again began the story of Tozer's fraudulent demand upon him. Sowerby did not interrupt him, but listened patiently to the end;—quite patiently, although Lord Lufton, as he made himself more and more angry by the history of his own wrongs, did not hesitate to pronounce certain threats against Mr. Sowerby, as he had pronounced them before against Mark Robarts. He would not, he said, pay a shilling, except through his lawyer; and he would instruct his lawyer, that before he paid anything the whole matter should be exposed openly in court. He did not care, he said, what might be the effect on himself or any one else. He was determined that the whole case should go to a jury. "To grand jury, and

special jury, and common jury, and Old Jewry, if you like," said Sowerby. "The truth is, Lufton, you lost some money, and as there was some delay in paying it, you have been harassed."

"I have paid more than I lost three times over," said Lord Lufton, stamping his foot.

"I will not go into that question now. It was settled, as I thought, some time ago by persons to whom you yourself referred it. But will you tell me this: Why on earth should Robarts be troubled in this matter? What has he done?"

"Well, I don't know. He arranged the matter with you."

"No such thing. He was kind enough to carry a message from you to me, and to convey back a return message from me to you. That has been his part in it."

"You don't suppose that I want to implicate him, do you?"

"I don't think you want to implicate any one, but you are hot-headed and difficult to deal with, and very irrational into the bargain. And, what is worse, I must say you are a little suspicious. In all this matter I have harassed myself greatly to oblige you, and in return I have got more kicks than halfpence."

"Did you give this bill to Tozer;—the bill which he now holds?"

"In the first place he does not hold it; and in the next place I did not give it to him. These things pass through scores of hands before they reach the man who makes the application for payment."

"And who came to me the other day?"

"That, I take it, was Tom Tozer, a brother of our Tozer's."

"Then he holds the bill, for I saw it with him."

"Wait a moment; that is very likely. I sent you word that you would have to pay for taking it up. Of course they don't abandon those sort of things without some consideration."

"Ten pounds, you said," observed Mark.

"Ten or twenty; some such sum as that. But you were hardly so soft as to suppose that the man would ask for such a sum. Of course he would demand the full payment. There is the bill, Lord Lufton," and Sowerby, producing a document, handed it across the table to his lordship. "I gave five-and-twenty pounds for it this morning."

Lord Lufton took the paper and looked at it. "Yes," said he, "that 's the bill. What am I to do with it now?"

"Put it with the family archives," said Sowerby,— "or behind the fire, just which you please."

"And is this the last of them? Can no other be brought up?"

"You know better than I do what paper you may have put your hand to. I know of no other. At the last renewal that was the only outstanding bill of which I was aware."

"And you have paid five-and-twenty pounds for it?"

"I have. Only that you have been in such a tantrum about it, and would have made such a noise this afternoon if I had not brought it, I might have had it for fifteen or twenty. In three or four days they would have taken fifteen."

"The odd ten pounds does not signify, and I 'll pay you the twenty-five, of course," said Lord Lufton, who now began to feel a little ashamed of himself.

"You may do as you please about that."

"Oh! it 's my affair, as a matter of course. Any amount of that kind I don't mind," and he sat down to fill in a check for the money.

"Well, now, Lufton, let me say a few words to you," said Sowerby, standing with his back against the fireplace, and playing with a small cane which he held in his hand. "For Heaven's sake try and be a little more charitable to those around you. When you become fidgety about anything, you indulge in language which the world won't stand, though men who know you as well as Robarts and I may consent to put up with it. You have accused me, since I have been here, of all manner of iniquity——"

"Now, Sowerby——"

"My dear fellow, let me have my say out. You have accused me, I say, and I believe that you have accused him. But it has never occurred to you, I dare say, to accuse yourself."

"Indeed it has."

"Of course you have been wrong in having to do with such men as Tozer. I have also been very wrong. It wants no great moral authority to tell us that. Pattern gentlemen don't have dealings with Tozer, and very much the better they are for not having them. But a man should have back enough to bear the weight which he himself puts on it. Keep away from Tozer, if you can, for the future;—but if you do deal with him, for Heaven's sake keep your temper."

"That 's all very fine, Sowerby; but you know as well as I do——"

"I know this," said the devil, quoting Scripture, as he folded up the check for twenty-five pounds, and

put it in his pocket, "that when a man sows tares, he won't reap wheat, and it 's no use to expect it. I am tough in these matters, and can bear a great deal,—that is, if I be not pushed too far," and he looked full into Lord Lufton's face as he spoke; "but I think you have been very hard upon Robarts."

"Never mind me, Sowerby. Lord Lufton and I are very old friends."

"And may therefore take a liberty with each other. Very well. And now I 've done my sermon. My dear dignitary, allow me to congratulate you. I hear from Fothergill that that little affair of yours has been definitely settled."

Mark's face again became clouded. "I rather think," said he, "that I shall decline the presentation."

"Decline it!" said Sowerby, who, having used his utmost efforts to obtain it, would have been more absolutely offended by such vacillation on the vicar's part than by any personal abuse which either he or Lord Lufton could heap upon him.

"I think I shall," said Mark.

"And why?"

Mark looked up at Lord Lufton, and then remained silent for a moment. "There can be no occasion for such a sacrifice under the present circumstances," said his lordship.

"And under what circumstances could there be occasion for it?" asked Sowerby. "The Duke of Omnium has used some little influence to get the place for you as a parish clergyman belonging to his county, and I should think it monstrous if you were now to reject it." Then Robarts openly stated the whole of his

reasons, explaining exactly what Lord Lufton had said with reference to the bill transactions, and to the allegation which would be made as to the stall having been given in payment for the accommodation.

"Upon my word that 's too bad," said Sowerby.

"Now, Sowerby, I won't be lectured," said Lord Lufton.

"I have done my lecture," said he, aware, perhaps, that it would not do for him to push his friend too far, "and I shall not give a second. But, Robarts, let me tell you this. As far as I know, Harold Smith has had little or nothing to do with the appointment. The duke has told the prime minister that he was anxious that a parish clergyman from the county should go into the chapter, and then, at Lord Brock's request, he named you. If under those circumstances you talk of giving it up, I shall believe you to be insane. As for the bill which you accepted for me, you need have no uneasiness about it. The money will be ready; but of course, when that time comes, you will let me have the hundred and thirty for the horse." And then Mr. Sowerby took his leave, having certainly made himself master of the occasion. If a man of fifty have his wits about him, and be not too prosy, he can generally make himself master of the occasion when his companions are under thirty. Robarts did not stay at the Albany long after him, but took his leave, having received some assurances of Lord Lufton's regret for what had passed and many promises of his friendship for the future. Indeed, Lord Lufton was a little ashamed of himself. "And as for the prebend, after what has passed, of course you must accept it." Nevertheless his lordship had not omitted to notice

Mr. Sowerby's hint about the horse and the hundred and thirty pounds.

Robarts, as he walked back to his hotel, thought that he certainly would accept the Barchester promotion, and was very glad that he had said nothing on the subject to his brother. On the whole, his spirits were much raised. That assurance of Sowerby's about the bill was very comforting to him; and, strange to say, he absolutely believed it. In truth, Sowerby had been so completely the winning horse at the late meeting, that both Lord Lufton and Robarts were inclined to believe almost anything he said;—which was not always the case with either of them.

CHAPTER XX.

HAROLD SMITH IN THE CABINET.

For a few days the whole Harold Smith party held their heads very high. It was not only that their man had been made a Cabinet minister; but a rumour had got abroad that Lord Brock, in selecting him, had amazingly strengthened his party, and done much to cure the wounds which his own arrogance and lack of judgment had inflicted on the body politic of his government. So said the Harold-Smithians, much elated. And when we consider what Harold had himself achieved, we need not be surprised that he himself was somewhat elated also. It must be a proud day for any man when he first walks into a Cabinet. But when a humble-minded man thinks of such a phase of life, his mind becomes lost in wondering what a Cabinet is. Are they gods that attend there or men? Do they sit on chairs, or hang about on clouds? When they speak, is the music of the spheres audible in their Olympian mansion, making heaven drowsy with its harmony? In what way do they congregate? In what order do they address each other? Are the voices of all the deities free and equal? Is plodding Themis from the Home Department, or Ceres from the Colonies, heard with as rapt attention as powerful Pallas of the Foreign Office, the goddess that is never seen without her

lance and helmet? Does our Whitehall Mars make eyes there at the bright young Venus of the Privy Seal, disgusting that quaint tinkering Vulcan, who is blowing his bellows at our Exchequer, not altogether unsuccessfully? Old Saturn of the Woolsack sits there mute, we will say, a relic of other days, as seated in this divan. The hall in which he rules is now elsewhere. Is our Mercury of the Post Office ever ready to fly nimbly from globe to globe, as great Jove may order him, while Neptune, unaccustomed to the waves, offers needful assistance to the Apollo of the India Office? How Juno sits apart, glum and huffy, uncared for, Council President though she be, great in name, but despised among gods,—that we can guess. If Bacchus and Cupid share Trade and the Board of Works between them, the fitness of things will have been as fully consulted as is usual. And modest Diana of the Petty Bag, latest summoned to these banquets of ambrosia, does she not cling retiring near the doors, hardly able as yet to make her low voice heard among her brother deities? But Jove, great Jove,—old Jove, the King of Olympus, hero among gods and men, how does he carry himself in these councils summoned by his voice? Does he lie there at his ease, with his purple cloak cut from the firmament around his shoulders? Is his thunderbolt ever at his hand to reduce a recreant god to order? Can he proclaim silence in that immortal hall? Is it not there, as elsewhere, in all places, and among all nations, that a king of gods and a king of men is and will be king, rules and will rule, over those who are smaller than himself?

Harold Smith, when he was summoned to the august hall of divine councils, did feel himself to be a proud

man; but we may perhaps conclude that at the first meeting or two he did not attempt to take a very leading part. Some of my readers may have sat at vestries, and will remember how mild, and, for the most part, mute is a new-comer at their board. He agrees generally, with abated enthusiasm; but should he differ, he apologises for the liberty. But anon, when the voices of his colleagues have become habitual in his ears,—when the strangeness of the room is gone, and the table before him is known and trusted,—he throws off his awe and dismay, and electrifies his brotherhood by the vehemence of his declamation and the violence of his thumping. So let us suppose it will be with Harold Smith, perhaps in the second or third season of his cabinet practice. Alas! alas! that such pleasures should be so fleeting! And then, too, there came upon him a blow which somewhat modified his triumph,—a cruel, dastard blow, from a hand which should have been friendly to him, from one to whom he had fondly looked to buoy him up in the great course that was before him. It had been said by his friends that in obtaining Harold Smith's services the prime minister had infused new, young, healthy blood into his body. Harold himself had liked the phrase, and had seen at a glance how it might have been made to tell by some friendly Supplehouse or the like. But why should a Supplehouse out of Elysium be friendly to a Harold Smith within it? Men lapped in Elysium, steeped to the neck in bliss, must expect to see their friends fall off from them. Human nature cannot stand it. If I want to get anything from my old friend Jones I like to see him shoved up into a high place. But if Jones, even in his high place, can do nothing for me, then his

exaltation above my head is an insult and an injury. Who ever believes his own dear intimate companion to be fit for the highest promotion? Mr. Supplehouse had known Mr. Smith too closely to think much of his young blood.

Consequently, there appeared an article in the Jupiter which was by no means complimentary to the ministry in general. It harped a good deal on the young-blood view of the question, and seemed to insinuate that Harold Smith's was not much better than diluted water. "The prime minister," the article said, "having lately recruited his impaired vigour by a new infusion of aristocratic influence of the highest moral tone, had again added to himself another tower of strength chosen from among the people. What might he not hope, now that he possessed the services of Lord Brittleback and Mr. Harold Smith! Renovated in a Medea's cauldron of such potency, all his effete limbs,—and it must be acknowledged that some of them had become very weak,—would come forth young and round and robust. A new energy would diffuse itself through every department; India would be saved and quieted; the ambition of France would be tamed; even-handed reform would remodel our courts of law and parliamentary elections; and Utopia would be realised. Such, it seems, is the result expected in the ministry from Mr. Harold Smith's young blood!"

This was cruel enough, but even this was hardly so cruel as the words with which the article ended. By that time irony had been dropped, and the writer spoke out earnestly his opinion upon the matter. "We beg to assure Lord Brock," said the article, "that such alliances as these will not save him from the speedy fall

with which his arrogance and want of judgment threaten to overwhelm it. As regards himself we shall be sorry to hear of his resignation. He is in many respects the best statesman that we possess for the emergencies of the present period. But if he be so ill-judged as to rest on such men as Mr. Harold Smith and Lord Brittleback for his assistants in the work which is before him, he must not expect that the country will support him. Mr. Harold Smith is not made of the stuff from which Cabinet ministers should be formed." Mr. Harold Smith, as he read this, seated at his breakfast-table, recognised, or said that he recognised, the hand of Mr. Supplehouse in every touch. That phrase about the effete limbs was Supplehouse all over, as was also the realisation of Utopia. "When he wants to be witty, he always talks about Utopia," said Mr. Harold Smith——to himself. For Mrs. Harold was not usually present in the flesh at these matutinal meals. And then he went down to his office, and saw in the glance of every man that he met an announcement that that article in the Jupiter had been read. His private secretary tittered in evident allusion to the article, and the way in which Buggins took his coat made it clear that it was well known in the messengers' lobby. "He won't have to fill up my vacancy when I go," Buggins was saying to himself. And then in the course of the morning came the Cabinet council, the second that he had attended, and he read in the countenance of every god and goddess there assembled that their chief was thought to have made another mistake. If Mr. Supplehouse could have been induced to write in another strain, then indeed that new blood might have been felt to have been efficacious.

All this was a great drawback to his happiness, but still it could not rob him of the fact of his position. Lord Brock could not ask him to resign because the Jupiter had written against him; nor was Lord Brock the man to desert a new colleague for such a reason. So Harold Smith girded his loins, and went about the duties of the Petty Bag with new zeal. "Upon my word, the Jupiter is right," said young Robarts to himself, as he finished his fourth dozen of private notes explanatory of everything in and about the Petty Bag Office. Harold Smith required that his private secretary's notes should be so terribly precise. But nevertheless, in spite of his drawbacks, Harold Smith was happy in his new honours, and Mrs. Harold Smith enjoyed them also. She certainly, among her acquaintance, did quiz the new Cabinet minister not a little, and it may be a question whether she was not as hard upon him as the writer in the Jupiter. She whispered a great deal to Miss Dunstable about new blood, and talked of going down to Westminster Bridge to see whether the Thames were really on fire. But though she laughed, she triumphed, and though she flattered herself that she bore her honours without any outward sign, the world knew that she was triumphing, and enjoyed her elation.

About this time she also gave a party;—not a pure-minded conversazione, like Mrs. Proudie, but a downright wicked worldly dance, at which there were fiddles, ices, and champagne sufficient to run away with the first quarter's salary accruing to Harold from the Petty Bag Office. To us this ball is chiefly memorable from the fact that Lady Lufton was among the guests. Immediately on her arrival in town she received cards

from Mrs. H. Smith for herself and Griselda, and was about to send back a reply at once declining the honour. What had she to do at the house of Mr. Sowerby's sister? But it so happened that at that moment her son was with her, and as he expressed a wish that she should go, she yielded. Had there been nothing in his tone of persuasion more than ordinary, —had it merely had reference to herself,—she would have smiled on him for his kind solicitude, have made out some occasion for kissing his forehead as she thanked him, and would still have declined. But he had reminded her both of himself and Griselda. "You might as well go, mother, for the sake of meeting me," he said. "Mrs. Harold caught me the other day, and would not liberate me till I had given her a promise."

"That is an attraction, certainly," said Lady Lufton. "I do like going to a house where I know that you will be there."

"And now that Miss Grantly is with you—you owe it to her to do the best you can for her."

"I certainly do, Ludovic; and I have to thank you for reminding me of my duty so gallantly." Then she said that she would go to Mrs. Harold Smith's. Poor lady! She gave much more weight to those few words about Miss Grantly than they deserved. It rejoiced her heart to think that her son was anxious to meet Griselda,—that he should perpetrate this little ruse in order to gain his wish. But he had spoken out of the mere emptiness of his mind, without thought of what he was saying, excepting that he wished to please his mother. But nevertheless he went to Mrs. Harold Smith's, and when there he did dance more than once with Griselda Grantly,—to the manifest discomfiture of

Lord Dumbello. He came in late, and at the moment Lord Dumbello was moving slowly up the room, with Griselda on his arm, while Lady Lufton was sitting near looking on with unhappy eyes. And then Griselda sat down, and Lord Dumbello stood mute at her elbow.

"Ludovic," whispered his mother, "Griselda is absolutely bored by that man, who follows her like a ghost. Do go and rescue her." He did go and rescue her, and afterwards danced with her for the best part of an hour consecutively. He knew that the world gave Lord Dumbello the credit of admiring the young lady, and was quite alive to the pleasure of filling his brother nobleman's heart with jealousy and anger. Moreover, Griselda was in his eyes very beautiful. It must be remembered that our gallant, gay Lothario had passed some considerable number of days with Miss Grantly in his mother's house, and the danger of such contiguity must be remembered also. Lord Lufton was by no means a man capable of seeing beauty unmoved, or of spending hours with a young lady without some approach to tenderness. Had there been no such approach, it is probable that Lady Lufton would not have pursued the matter. But, according to her ideas on such subjects, her son Ludovic had on some occasions shown quite sufficient partiality for Miss Grantly to justify her in her hopes, and to lead her to think that nothing but opportunity was wanted. Now, at this ball of Mrs. Smith's, he did, for a while, seem to be taking advantage of such opportunity, and his mother's heart was glad. If things should turn out well on this evening she would forgive Mrs. Harold Smith all her sins. And for a while it looked as though things would turn out well. Not that it

must be supposed that Lord Lufton had come there with any intention of making love to Griselda, or that he ever had any fixed thought that he was doing so. Young men in such matters are so often without any fixed thoughts! They are such absolute moths. They amuse themselves with the light of the beautiful candle, fluttering about, on and off, in and out of the flame with dazzled eyes, till in a rash moment they rush in too near the wick, and then fall with singed wings and crippled legs, burnt up and reduced to tinder by the consuming fire of matrimony. Happy marriages, men say, are made in heaven, and I believe it. Most marriages are fairly happy, in spite of Sir Cresswell Cresswell; and yet how little care is taken on earth towards such a result!

"I hope my mother is using you well?" said Lord Lufton to Griselda, as they were standing together in a doorway between the dances.

"Oh, yes; she is very kind."

"You have been rash to trust yourself in the hands of so very staid and demure a person. And, indeed, you owe your presence here at Mrs. Harold Smith's first Cabinet ball altogether to me. I don't know whether you are aware of that."

"Oh, yes; Lady Lufton told me."

"And are you grateful or otherwise? Have I done you an injury or a benefit? Which do you find best, sitting with a novel in the corner of a sofa in Bruton Street, or pretending to dance polkas here with Lord Dumbello?"

"I don't know what you mean. I have n't stood up with Lord Dumbello all the evening. We were going to dance a quadrille, but we did n't."

"Exactly; just what I say;—pretending to do it. Even that 's a good deal for Lord Dumbello, is n't it?" And then Lord Lufton, not being a pretender himself, put his arm round her waist, and away they went up and down the room, and across and about, with an energy which showed that what Griselda lacked in her tongue she made up with her feet. Lord Dumbello, in the meantime, stood by, observant, thinking to himself that Lord Lufton was a glib-tongued, empty-headed ass, and reflecting that if his rival were to break the tendons of his leg in one of those rapid evolutions, or suddenly come by any other dreadful misfortune, such as the loss of all his property, absolute blindness, or chronic lumbago, it would only serve him right. And in that frame of mind he went to bed, in spite of the prayer which no doubt he said as to his forgiveness of other people's trespasses. Then, when the two dancers were again standing, Lord Lufton, in the little intervals between his violent gasps for fresh breath, asked Griselda if she liked London. "Pretty well," said Griselda, gasping also a little herself.

"I am afraid—you were very dull—down at Framley."

"Oh, no;—I liked it particularly."

"It was a great bore when you went—away, I know. There was n't a soul—about the house worth speaking to." And they remained silent for a minute till their lungs had become quiescent.

"Not a soul," he continued;—not of falsehood prepense, for he was not in fact thinking of what he was saying. It did not occur to him at the moment that he had truly found Griselda's going a great relief, and that he had been able to do more in the way of

conversation with Lucy Robarts in one hour than with Miss Grantly during a month of intercourse in the same house. But, nevertheless, we should not be hard upon him. All is fair in love and war; and if this was not love, it was the usual thing that stands as a counterpart for it.

"Not a soul," said Lord Lufton. "I was very nearly hanging myself in the park next morning;—only it rained."

"What nonsense! You had your mother to talk to."

"Oh, my mother,—yes; and you may tell me too, if you please, that Captain Culpepper was there. I do love my mother dearly; but do you think that she could make up for your absence?" And his voice was very tender, and so were his eyes.

"And Miss Robarts; I thought you admired her very much?"

"What, Lucy Robarts?" said Lord Lufton, feeling that Lucy's name was more than he at present knew how to manage. Indeed, that name destroyed all the life there was in that little flirtation. "I do like Lucy Robarts, certainly. She is very clever; but it so happened that I saw little or nothing of her after you were gone." To this Griselda made no answer, but drew herself up, and looked as cold as Diana when she froze Orion in the cave. Nor could she be got to give more than monosyllabic answers to the three or four succeeding attempts at conversation which Lord Lufton made. And then they danced again, but Griselda's steps were by no means so lively as before. What took place between them on that occasion was very little more than what has been here related. There

may have been an ice or a glass of lemonade into the bargain, and perhaps the faintest possible attempt at hand-pressing. But if so, it was all on one side. To such overtures as that Griselda Grantly was as cold as any Diana. But little as all this was, it was sufficient to fill Lady Lufton's mind and heart. No mother with six daughters was ever more anxious to get them off her hands than Lady Lufton was to see her son married,—married, that is, to some girl of the right sort. And now it really did seem as though he were actually going to comply with her wishes. She had watched him during the whole evening, painfully endeavouring not to be observed in doing so. She had seen Lord Dumbello's failure and wrath, and she had seen her son's victory and pride. Could it be the case that he had already said something, which was still allowed to be indecisive only through Griselda's coldness? Might it not be the case that by some judicious aid on her part that indecision might be turned into certainty, and that coldness into warmth? But then any such interference requires so delicate a touch,—as Lady Lufton was well aware.

"Have you had a pleasant evening?" Lady Lufton said, when she and Griselda were seated together with their feet on the fender of her ladyship's dressing-room. Lady Lufton had especially invited her guest into this, her most private sanctum, to which, as a rule, none had admittance but her daughter, and sometimes Fanny Robarts. But to what sanctum might not such a daughter-in-law as Griselda have admittance? "Oh, yes,—very," said Griselda.

"It seemed to me that you bestowed most of your smiles upon Ludovic." And Lady Lufton put on a

look of good pleasure that such should have been the case.

"Oh! I don't know," said Griselda; "I did dance with him two or three times."

"Not once too often to please me, my dear. I like to see Ludovic dancing with my friends."

"I am sure I am very much obliged to you, Lady Lufton."

"Not at all, my dear. I don't know where he could get so nice a partner." And then she paused a moment, not feeling how far she might go. In the meantime Griselda sat still, staring at the hot coals. "Indeed, I know that he admires you very much," continued Lady Lufton.

"Oh! no, I am sure he does n't," said Griselda; and then there was another pause.

"I can only say this," said Lady Lufton, "that if he does do so,—and I believe he does,—it would give me very great pleasure. For you know, my dear, that I am very fond of you myself."

"Oh! thank you," said Griselda, and stared at the coals more perseveringly than before.

"He is a young man of a most excellent disposition; —though he is my own son, I will say that;—and if there should be anything between you and him——"

"There is n't, indeed, Lady Lufton."

"But if there ever should be I should be delighted to think that Ludovic had made so good a choice."

"But there will never be anything of the sort, I 'm sure, Lady Lufton. He is not thinking of such a thing in the least."

"Well, perhaps he may, some day. And now, goodnight, my dear."

"Good-night, Lady Lufton." And Griselda kissed her with the utmost composure, and betook herself to her own bedroom. Before she retired to sleep she looked carefully to her different articles of dress, discovering what amount of damage the evening's wear and tear might have inflicted.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHY PUCK, THE PONY, WAS BEATEN.

Mark Robarts returned home the day after the scene at the Albany, considerably relieved in spirit. He now felt that he might accept the stall without discredit to himself as a clergyman in doing so. Indeed, after what Mr. Sowerby had said, and after Lord Lufton's assent to it, it would have been madness, he considered, to decline it. And then, too, Mr. Sowerby's promise about the bills was very comfortable to him. After all, might it not be possible that he might get rid of all these troubles with no other drawback than that of having to pay 130*l.* for a horse that was well worth the money?

On the day after his return he received proper authentic tidings of his presentation to the prebend. He was, in fact, already prebendary, or would be as soon as the dean and chapter had gone through the form of instituting him in his stall. The income was already his own; and the house also would be given up to him in a week's time,—a part of the arrangement with which he would most willingly have dispensed had it been at all possible to do so. His wife congratulated him nicely, with open affection, and apparent satisfaction at the arrangement. The enjoyment of one's own happiness at such windfalls depends so much on the

free and freely expressed enjoyment of others! Lady Lufton's congratulations had nearly made him throw up the whole thing; but his wife's smiles re-encouraged him; and Lucy's warm and eager joy made him feel quite delighted with Mr. Sowerby and the Duke of Omnium. And then that splendid animal, Dandy, came home to the parsonage stables, much to the delight of the groom and gardener, and of the assistant stable boy who had been allowed to creep into the establishment, unawares, as it were, since "master" had taken so keenly to hunting. But this satisfaction was not shared in the drawing-room. The horse was seen on his first journey round to the stable gate, and questions were immediately asked. It was a horse, Mark said, which he had bought from Mr. Sowerby some little time since, with the object of obliging him. He, Mark, intended to sell him again, as soon as he could do so judiciously. This, as I have said above, was not satisfactory. Neither of the two ladies at Framley Parsonage knew much about horses, or of the manner in which one gentleman might think it proper to oblige another by purchasing the superfluities of his stable; but they did both feel that there were horses enough in the parsonage stable without Dandy, and that the purchasing of a hunter with the view of immediately selling him again was, to say the least of it, an operation hardly congenial with the usual tastes and pursuits of a clergyman. "I hope you did not give very much money for him, Mark," said Fanny.

"Not more than I shall get again," said Mark; and Fanny saw from the form of his countenance that she had better not pursue the subject any further at that moment.

"I suppose I shall have to go into residence almost immediately," said Mark, recurring to the more agreeable subject of the stall.

"And shall we all have to go and live at Barchester at once?" asked Lucy.

"The house will not be furnished, will it, Mark?" said his wife. "I don't know how we shall get on."

"Don't frighten yourselves. I shall take lodgings in Barchester."

"And we shall not see you all the time," said Mrs. Robarts with dismay. But the prebendary explained that he would be backwards and forwards at Framley every week, and that in all probability he would only sleep at Barchester on the Saturdays and Sundays;—and, perhaps, not always then.

"It does not seem very hard work, that of a prebendary," said Lucy.

"But it is very dignified," said Fanny. "Prebendaries are dignitaries of the church—are they not, Mark?"

"Decidedly," said he; "and their wives also, by special canon law. The worst of it is that both of them are obliged to wear wigs."

"Shall you have a hat, Mark, with curly things at the side, and strings through to hold them up?" asked Lucy.

"I fear that does not come within my perquisites."

"Not a rosette? Then I shall never believe that you are a dignitary. Do you mean to say that you will wear a hat like a common parson;—like Mr. Crawley, for instance?"

"Well;—I believe I may give a twist to the leaf; but I am by no means sure till I shall have consulted the dean in chapter."

And thus at the parsonage they talked over the good things that were coming to them, and endeavoured to forget the new horse, and the hunting boots that had been used so often during the last winter, and Lady Lufton's altered countenance. It might be that the evils would vanish away, and the good things remain with them. It was now the month of April, and the fields were beginning to look green, and the wind had got itself out of the east and was soft and genial, and the early spring flowers were showing their bright colours in the parsonage garden, and all things were sweet and pleasant. This was a period of the year that was usually dear to Mrs. Robarts. Her husband was always a better parson when the warm months came than he had been during the winter. The distant county friends, whom she did not know and of whom she did not approve, went away when the spring came, leaving their houses innocent and empty. The parish duty was better attended to, and perhaps domestic duties also. At such period he was a pattern parson and a pattern husband, atoning to his own conscience for past shortcomings by present zeal. And then, though she had never acknowledged it to herself, the absence of her dear friend Lady Lufton was perhaps in itself not disagreeable. Mrs. Robarts did love Lady Lufton heartily; but it must be acknowledged of her ladyship that, with all her good qualities, she was inclined to be masterful. She liked to rule, and she made people feel that she liked it. Mrs. Robarts would never have confessed that she laboured under a sense of thraldom; but perhaps she was mouse enough to enjoy the temporary absence of her kind-hearted cat. When Lady Lufton was away Mrs. Robarts herself had more play

in the parish. And Mark also was not unhappy, though he did not find it practicable immediately to turn Dandy into money. Indeed, just at this moment, when he was a good deal over at Barchester, going through those deep mysteries and rigid ecclesiastical examinations which are necessary before a clergyman can become one of a chapter, Dandy was rather a thorn in his side. Those wretched bills were to come due early in May, and before the end of April Sowerby wrote to him saying that he was doing his utmost to provide for the evil day; but that if the price of Dandy could be remitted to him at once, it would greatly facilitate his object. Nothing could be more different than Mr. Sowerby's tone about money at different times. When he wanted to raise the wind, everything was so important. Haste and superhuman efforts, and men running to and fro with blank acceptances in their hands, could alone stave off the crack of doom. But at other times, when retaliatory applications were made to him, he could prove with the easiest voice and most jaunty manner that everything was quite serene. Now, at this period, he was in that mood of superhuman efforts, and he called loudly for the hundred and thirty pounds for Dandy. After what had passed, Mark could not bring himself to say that he would pay nothing till the bills were safe; and therefore, with the assistance of Mr. Forrest of the Bank, he did remit the price of Dandy to his friend Sowerby in London.

And Lucy Robarts;—we must now say a word of her. We have seen how, on that occasion when the world was at her feet, she had sent her noble suitor away, not only dismissed, but so dismissed that he

might be taught never again to offer to her the sweet incense of his vows. She had declared to him plainly that she did not love him and could not love him, and had thus thrown away not only riches and honour and high station, but, more than that,—much worse than that,—she had flung away from her the lover to whose love her warm heart clung. That her love did cling to him, she knew even then, and owned more thoroughly as soon as he was gone. So much her pride had done for her, and that strong resolve that Lady Lufton should not scowl on her and tell her that she had entrapped her son. It will, perhaps, be said of Lord Lufton himself that, putting aside his peerage and broad acres, and handsome, sonsy face, he was not worth a girl's care and love. That will be said because people think that heroes in books should be so much better than heroes got up for the world's common wear and tear. I may as well confess that of absolute, true heroism there was only a moderate admixture in Lord Lufton's composition; but what would the world come to if none but absolutely true heroes were to be thought worthy of women's love? What would the men do? and what,—oh! what would become of the women? Lucy Robarts in her heart did not give her dismissed lover credit for much more heroism that did truly appertain to him;—did not, perhaps, give him full credit for a certain amount of heroism which did really appertain to him; but, nevertheless, she would have been very glad to take him could she have done so without wounding her pride.

That girls should not marry for money we are all agreed. A lady who can sell herself for a title or an estate, for an income or a set of family diamonds,

treats herself as a farmer treats his sheep and oxen;—makes hardly more of herself, of her own inner self, in which are comprised a mind and soul, than the poor wretch of her own sex who earns her bread in the lowest stage of degradation. But a title, and an estate, and an income, are matters which will weigh in the balance with all Eve's daughters,—as they do with all Adam's sons. Pride of place, and the power of living well in front of the world's eye, are dear to us all;—are, doubtless, intended to be dear. Only in acknowledging so much, let us remember that there are prices at which these good things may be too costly. Therefore,—being desirous of telling the truth in this matter,—I must confess that Lucy did speculate with some regret on what it would have been to be Lady Lufton. To have been the wife of such a man, the owner of such a heart, the mistress of such a destiny,—what more or what better could the world have done for her? And now she had thrown all that aside because she would not endure that Lady Lufton should call her a scheming, artful girl! Actuated by that fear she had repulsed him with a falsehood, though the matter was one on which it was so terribly expedient that she should tell the truth. Nevertheless she was cheerful with her brother and sister-in-law. It was when she was quite alone, at night in her own room, or in her solitary walks, that a single silent tear would gather in the corner of her eye and gradually moisten her eyelids. "She never told her love," nor did she allow concealment to "feed on her damask cheek." In all her employments, in her ways about the house, and her accustomed quiet mirth, she was the same as ever. In this she showed the peculiar strength which God

had given her. But not the less did she in truth mourn for her lost love and spoiled ambition.

"We are going to drive over to Hogglestock this morning," Fanny said one day at breakfast. "I suppose, Mark, you won't go with us?"

"Well, no; I think not. The pony carriage is wretched for three."

"Oh, as for that, I should have thought the new horse might have been able to carry you as far as that. I heard you say you wanted to see Mr. Crawley."

"So I do; and the new horse, as you call him, shall carry me there to-morrow. Will you say that I 'll be over about twelve o'clock?"

"You had better say earlier, as he is always out about the parish."

"Very well, say eleven. It is parish business about which I am going, so it need not irk his conscience to stay in for me."

"Well, Lucy, we must drive ourselves, that 's all. You shall be charioteer going, and then we 'll change coming back." To all which Lucy agreed, and as soon as their work in the school was over they started. Not a word had been spoken between them about Lord Lufton since that evening, now more than a month ago, on which they had been walking together in the garden. Lucy had so demeaned herself on that occasion as to make her sister-in-law quite sure that there had been no love passages up to that time; and nothing had since occurred which had created any suspicion in Mrs. Robarts's mind. She had seen at once that all the close intimacy between them was over, and thought that everything was as it should be.

"Do you know, I have an idea," she said in the

pony carriage that day, "that Lord Lufton will marry Griselda Grantly." Lucy could not refrain from giving a little check at the reins which she was holding, and she felt that the blood rushed quickly to her heart. But she did not betray herself. "Perhaps he may," she said, and then gave the pony a little touch with her whip.

"Oh, Lucy, I won't have Puck beaten. He was going very nicely."

"I beg Puck's pardon. But you see when one is trusted with a whip one feels such a longing to use it."

"Oh, but you should keep it still. I feel almost certain that Lady Lufton would like such a match."

"I dare say she might. Miss Grantly will have a large fortune, I believe."

"It is not that altogether; but she is the sort of young lady that Lady Lufton likes. She is ladylike and very beautiful."

"Come, Fanny!"

"I really think she is; not what I should call lovely, you know, but very beautiful. And then she is quiet and reserved; she does not require excitement, and I am sure is conscientious in the performance of her duties."

"Very conscientious, I have no doubt," said Lucy, with something like a sneer in her tone. "But the question, I suppose, is, whether Lord Lufton likes her."

"I think he does,—in a sort of way. He did not talk to her so much as he did to you."

"Ah! that was all Lady Lufton's fault, because she did n't have him properly labelled."

"There does not seem to have been much harm done?"

"Oh! by God's mercy, very little. As for me, I shall get over it in three or four years, I don't doubt; —that 's if I can get ass's milk and change of air."

"We 'll take you to Barchester for that. But as I was saying, I really do think Lord Lufton likes Griselda Grantly."

"Then I really do think that he has uncommon bad taste," said Lucy, with a reality in her voice differing much from the tone of banter she had hitherto used.

"What, Lucy!" said her sister-in-law, looking at her. "Then I fear we shall really want the ass's milk."

"Perhaps, considering my position, I ought to know nothing of Lord Lufton, for you say that it is very dangerous for young ladies to know young gentlemen. But I do know enough of him to understand that he ought not to like such a girl as Griselda Grantly. He ought to know that she is a mere automaton, cold, lifeless, spiritless, and vapid. There is, I believe, nothing in her mentally, whatever may be her moral excellencies. To me she is more absolutely like a statue than any other human being I ever saw. To sit still and be admired is all that she desires; and if she cannot get that, to sit still and not be admired would almost suffice for her. I do not worship Lady Lufton as you do; but I think quite well enough of her to wonder that she should choose such a girl as that for her son's wife. That she does wish it I do not doubt. But I shall indeed be surprised if he wishes it also." And then, as she finished her speech, Lucy again flogged the pony. This she did in vexation, because she felt that the tell-tale blood had suffused her face. "Why, Lucy, if he were your brother you could not be more eager about it."

"No, I could not. He is the only man friend with whom I was ever intimate, and I cannot bear to think that he should throw himself away. It 's horridly improper to care about such a thing, I have no doubt."

"I think we might acknowledge that if he and his mother are both satisfied, we may be satisfied also."

"I shall not be satisfied. It 's no use your looking at me, Fanny. You will make me talk of it, and I won't tell a lie on the subject. I do like Lord Lufton very much; and I do dislike Griselda Grantly almost as much. Therefore I shall not be satisfied if they become man and wife. However, I do not suppose that either of them will ask my consent;—nor is it probable that Lady Lufton will do so." And then they went on for perhaps a quarter of a mile without speaking.

"Poor Puck!" at last Lucy said. "He shan't be whipped any more, shall he, because Miss Grantly looks like a statue? And, Fanny, don't tell Mark to put me into a lunatic asylum. I also know a hawk from a heron, and that 's why I don't like to see such a very unfitting marriage." There was then nothing more said on the subject, and in two minutes they arrived at the house of the Hogglestock clergyman. Mrs. Crawley had brought two children with her when she came from the Cornish curacy to Hogglestock, and two other babies had been added to her cares since then. One of these was now ill with croup, and it was with the object of offering to the mother some comfort and solace that the present visit was made. The two ladies got down from their carriage, having obtained the services of a boy to hold Puck, and soon found themselves in Mrs. Crawley's single sitting-room. She was sitting there with her foot on the board of a child's

cradle, rocking it, while an infant about three months old was lying in her lap. For the elder one, who was the sufferer, had in her illness usurped the baby's place. Two other children, considerably older, were also in the room. The eldest was a girl, perhaps nine years of age, and the other a boy three years her junior. These were standing at their father's elbow, who was studiously endeavouring to initiate them in the early mysteries of grammar. To tell the truth, Mrs. Robarts would much have preferred that Mr. Crawley had not been there, for she had with her and about her certain contraband articles, presents for the children,—as they were to be called,—but in truth relief for that poor, much-tasked mother, which they knew it would be impossible to introduce in Mr. Crawley's presence. She, as we have said, was not quite so gaunt, not altogether so haggard as in the latter of those dreadful Cornish days. Lady Lufton and Mrs. Arabin between them, and the scanty comfort of their improved, though still wretched income, had done something towards bringing her back to the world in which she lived in the soft days of her childhood. But even the liberal stipend of a hundred and thirty pounds a year would not admit of a gentleman with his wife and four children living with the ordinary comforts of an artisan's family. As regards the mere eating and drinking, the amounts of butcher's meat and tea and butter, they of course were used in quantities which any artisan would have regarded as compatible only with demi-starvation. Better clothing for her children was necessary, and better clothing for him. As for her own raiment, the wives of few artisans would have been content to put

up with Mrs. Crawley's best gown. The stuff of which it was made had been paid for by her mother when she with much difficulty bestowed upon her daughter her modest wedding trousseau.

Lucy had never seen Mrs. Crawley. These visits to Hogglestock were not frequent, and had generally been made by Lady Lufton and Mrs. Robarts together. It was known that they were distasteful to Mr. Crawley, who felt a savage satisfaction in being left to himself. It may almost be said of him that he felt angry with those who relieved him, and he had certainly never as yet forgiven the dean of Barchester for paying his debts. The dean had also given him his present living; and consequently his old friend was not now so dear to him as when in old days he would come down to that farmhouse, almost as penniless as the curate himself. Then they would walk together for hours along the rock-bound shore, listening to the waves, discussing deep polemical mysteries, sometimes with hot fury, then again with tender, loving charity, but always with a mutual acknowledgment of each other's truth. Now they lived comparatively near together, but no opportunities arose for such discussions. At any rate once a quarter Mr. Crawley was pressed by his old friend to visit him at the deanery, and Dr. Arabin had promised that no one else should be in the house if Mr. Crawley objected to society. But this was not what he wanted. The finery and grandeur of the deanery, and the comfort of that warm, snug library, would silence him at once. Why did not Dr. Arabin come out there to Hogglestock, and tramp with him through the dirty lanes as they used to tramp? Then

he could have enjoyed himself; then he could have talked; then old days would have come back to them. But now!——"Arabin always rides on a sleek, fine horse now-a-days," he once said to his wife with a sneer. His poverty had been so terrible to himself that it was not in his heart to love a rich friend.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOGGLESTOCK PARSONAGE.

At the end of the last chapter, we left Lucy Robarts waiting for an introduction to Mrs. Crawley, who was sitting with one baby in her lap while she was rocking another who lay in a cradle at her feet. Mr. Crawley, in the meanwhile, had risen from his seat with his finger between the leaves of an old grammar out of which he had been teaching his two elder children. The whole Crawley family was thus before them when Mrs. Robarts and Lucy entered the sitting-room. "This is my sister-in-law, Lucy," said Mrs. Robarts. "Pray don't move now, Mrs. Crawley; or if you do, let me take baby." And she put out her arms and took the infant into them, making him quite at home there; for she had work of this kind of her own, at home, which she by no means neglected, though the attendance of nurses was more plentiful with her than at Hogglestock. Mrs. Crawley did get up, and told Lucy that she was glad to see her, and Mr. Crawley came forward, grammar in hand, looking humble and meek. Could we have looked into the innermost spirit of him and his life's partner, we should have seen that mixed with the pride of his poverty there was some feeling of disgrace that he was poor, but that with her, regarding this matter, there was neither pride nor shame. The realities of life had become so stern to her that the out-

ward aspects of them were as nothing. She would have liked a new gown because it would have been useful; but it would have been nothing to her if all the country knew that the one in which she went to church had been turned three times. It galled him, however, to think that he and his were so poorly dressed. "I am afraid you can hardly find a chair, Miss Robarts," said Mr. Crawley.

"Oh, yes, there is nothing here but this young gentleman's library," said Lucy, moving a pile of ragged, coverless books on to the table. "I hope he 'll forgive me for moving them."

"They are not Bob's,—at least, not the most of them,—but mine," said the girl.

"But some of them are mine," said the boy; "ain't they, Grace?"

"And are you a great scholar?" asked Lucy, drawing the child to her.

"I don't know," said Grace, with a sheepish face. "I am in Greek Delectus and the irregular verbs."

"Greek Delectus and the irregular verbs!" And Lucy put up her hands with astonishment.

"And she knows an ode of Horace all by heart," said Bob.

"An ode of Horace!" said Lucy, still holding the young shamefaced female prodigy close to her knees.

"It is all that I can give them," said Mr. Crawley, apologetically. "A little scholarship is the only fortune that has come in my way, and I endeavour to share that with my children."

"I believe men say that it is the best fortune any of us can have," said Lucy, thinking, however, in her own mind, that Horace and the irregular Greek verbs

savoured too much of precocious forcing in a young lady of nine years old. But, nevertheless, Grace was a pretty, simple-looking girl, and clung to her ally closely, and seemed to like being fondled. So that Lucy anxiously wished that Mr. Crawley could be got rid of, and the presents produced.

"I hope you have left Mr. Robarts quite well," said Mr. Crawley, with a stiff, ceremonial voice, differing very much from that in which he had so energetically addressed his brother clergyman when they were alone together in the study at Framley.

"He is quite well, thank you. I suppose you have heard of his good fortune?"

"Yes; I have heard of it," said Mr. Crawley, gravely. "I hope that his promotion may tend in every way to his advantage here and hereafter." It seemed, however, to be manifest, from the manner in which he expressed his kind wishes, that his hopes and expectations did not go hand-in-hand together.

"By-the-bye, he desired us to say that he will call here to-morrow;—at about eleven, did n't he say, Fanny?"

"Yes; he wishes to see you about some parish business, I think," said Mrs. Robarts, looking up for a moment from the anxious discussion in which she was already engaged with Mrs. Crawley on nursery matters.

"Pray tell him," said Mr. Crawley, "that I shall be happy to see him; though, perhaps, now that new duties have been thrown upon him, it will be better that I should visit him at Framley."

"His new duties do not disturb him much as yet," said Lucy. "And his riding over here will be no trouble to him."

"Yes; there he has the advantage over me. I unfortunately have no horse." And then Lucy began petting the little boy, and by degrees slipped a small bag of gingerbread-nuts out of her muff into his hands. She had not the patience necessary for waiting, as had her sister-in-law. The boy took the bag, peeped into it, and then looked up into her face.

"What is that, Bob?" said Mr. Crawley.

"Gingerbread," faltered Bobby, feeling that a sin had been committed, though, probably, feeling also that he himself could hardly as yet be accounted as deeply guilty.

"Miss Robarts," said the father, "we are very much obliged to you; but our children are hardly used to such things."

"I am a lady with a weak mind, Mr. Crawley, and always carry things of this sort about with me when I go to visit children; so you must forgive me, and allow your little boy to accept them."

"Oh, certainly. Bob, my child, give the bag to your mamma, and she will let you and Grace have them, one at a time." And then the bag in a solemn manner was carried over to their mother, who, taking it from her son's hands, laid it high on a book-shelf.

"And not one now?" said Lucy Robarts, very piteously. "Don't be so hard, Mr. Crawley,—not upon them, but upon me. May I not learn whether they are good of their kind?"

"I am sure they are very good; but I think their mamma will prefer their being put by for the present." This was very discouraging to Lucy. If one small bag of gingerbread-nuts created so great a difficulty, how was she to dispose of the pot of guava jelly and box

of bonbons which were still in her muff; or how distribute the packet of oranges with which the pony carriage was laden? And there was jelly for the sick child, and chicken broth, which was, indeed, another jelly; and, to tell the truth openly, there was also a joint of fresh pork and a basket of eggs from the Framley Parsonage farm-yard, which Mrs. Robarts was to introduce, should she find herself capable of doing so; —but which would certainly be cast out with utter scorn by Mr. Crawley, if tendered in his immediate presence. There had also been a suggestion as to adding two or three bottles of port; but the courage of the ladies had failed them on that head, and the wine was not now added to their difficulties. Lucy found it very difficult to keep up a conversation with Mr. Crawley,—the more so, as Mrs. Robarts and Mrs. Crawley presently withdrew into a bedroom, taking the two younger children with them. "How unlucky," thought Lucy, "that she has not got my muff with her!" But the muff lay in her lap, ponderous with its rich enclosures.

"I suppose you will live in Barchester for a portion of the year now," said Mr. Crawley.

"I really do not know as yet. Mark talks of taking lodgings for his first month's residence."

"But he will have the house, will he not?"

"Oh, yes; I suppose so."

"I fear he will find it interfere with his own parish; —with his general utility there; the schools, for instance."

"Mark thinks that, as he is so near, he need not be much absent from Framley, even during his residence. And then Lady Lufton is so good about the schools."

"Ah! yes; but Lady Lufton is not a clergyman, Miss Robarts." It was on Lucy's tongue to say that her ladyship was pretty nearly as bad, but she stopped herself. At this moment Providence sent great relief to Miss Robarts in the shape of Mrs. Crawley's red-armed maid-of-all-work, who, walking up to her master, whispered into his ear that he was wanted. It was the time of day at which his attendance was always required in his parish school; and that attendance being so punctually given, those who wanted him looked for him there at this hour, and if he were absent, did not scruple to send for him. "Miss Robarts, I am afraid you must excuse me," said he, getting up and taking his hat and stick. Lucy begged that she might not be at all in the way, and already began to speculate how she might best unload her treasures. "Will you make my compliments to Mrs. Robarts, and say that I am sorry to miss the pleasure of wishing her good-bye? But I shall probably see her as she passes the schoolhouse." And then, stick in hand, he walked forth, and Lucy fancied that Bobby's eyes immediately rested on the bag of gingerbread-nuts.

"Bob," said she, almost in a whisper, "do you like sugar-plums?"

"Very much, indeed," said Bob, with exceeding gravity, and with his eye upon the window to see whether his father had passed.

"Then come here," said Lucy. But as she spoke the door again opened, and Mr. Crawley reappeared. "I have left a book behind me," he said; and coming back through the room, he took up the well-worn prayer-book which accompanied him in all his wanderings through the parish. Bobby, when he saw his

father, had retreated a few steps back, as also did Grace, who, to confess the truth, had been attracted by the sound of sugar-plums, in spite of the irregular verbs. Lucy withdrew her hand from her muff, and looked guilty. Was she not deceiving the good man, —nay, teaching his own children to deceive him? But there are men made of such stuff that an angel could hardly live with them without some deceit. "Papa 's gone now," whispered Bobby; "I saw him turn round the corner." He, at any rate, had learned his lesson, —as it was natural that he should do. Some one else, also, had learned that papa was gone; for while Bob and Grace were still counting the big lumps of sugar-candy, each employed the while for inward solace with an inch of barley-sugar, the front door opened, and a big basket, and a bundle done up in a kitchen-cloth, made surreptitious entrance into the house, and were quickly unpacked by Mrs. Robarts herself on the table in Mrs. Crawley's bedroom.

"I did venture to bring them," said Fanny, with a look of shame, "for I know how a sick child occupies the whole house."

"Ah! my friend," said Mrs. Crawley, taking hold of Mrs. Robarts's arm and looking into her face, "that sort of shame is over with me. God has tried us with want, and for my children's sake I am glad of such relief."

"But will he be angry?"

"I will manage it. Dear Mrs. Robarts, you must not be surprised at him. His lot is sometimes very hard to bear. Such things are so much worse for a man than for a woman." Fanny was not quite prepared to admit this in her own heart, but she made no

reply on that head. "I am sure I hope we may be able to be of use to you," she said, "if you will only look upon me as an old friend, and write to me if you want me. I hesitate to come frequently for fear that I should offend him." And then, by degrees, there was confidence between them, and the poverty-stricken helpmate of the perpetual curate was able to speak of the weight of her burden to the well-to-do young wife of the Barchester prebendary. "It was hard," the former said, "to feel herself so different from the wives of other clergymen around her—to know that they lived softly, while she, with all the work of her hands, and unceasing struggle of her energies, could hardly manage to place wholesome food before her husband and children. It was a terrible thing,—a grievous thing to think of, that all the work of her mind should be given up to such subjects as these. But, nevertheless, she could bear it," she said, "as long as he would carry himself like a man, and face his lot boldly before the world." And then she told how he had been better there at Hogglestock than in their former residence down in Cornwall, and in warm language she expressed her thanks to the friend who had done so much for them. "Mrs. Arabin told me that she was so anxious you should go to them," said Mrs. Robarts.

"Ah, yes; but that, I fear, is impossible. The children, you know, Mrs. Robarts."

"I would take care of two of them for you."

"Oh, no; I could not punish you for your goodness in that way. But he would not go. He could go and leave me at home. Sometimes I have thought that it might be so, and I have done all in my power to persuade him. I have told him that if he could mix

once more with the world, with the clerical world, you know, that he would be better fitted for the performance of his own duties. But he answers me angrily, that it is impossible,—that his coat is not fit for the dean's table," and Mrs. Crawley almost blushed as she spoke of such a reason.

"What! with an old friend like Dr. Arabin? Surely that must be nonsense."

"I know that it is. The dean would be glad to see him with any coat. But the fact is that he cannot bear to enter the house of a rich man unless his duty calls him there."

"But surely that is a mistake?"

"It is a mistake. But what can I do? I fear that he regards the rich as his enemies. He is pining for the solace of some friend to whom he could talk,—for some equal, with a mind educated like his own, to whose thoughts he could listen, and to whom he could speak his own thoughts. But such a friend must be equal, not only in mind, but in purse; and where can he ever find such a man as that?"

"But you may get better preferment."

"Ah, no; and if he did, we are hardly fit for it now. If I could think that I could educate my children; if I could only do something for my poor Grace——" In answer to this Mrs. Robarts said a word or two, but not much. She resolved, however, that if she could get her husband's leave, something should be done for Grace. Would it not be a good work? And was it not incumbent on her to make some kindly use of all the goods with which Providence had blessed herself? Then they went back to the sitting-room, each again with a young child in her arms, Mrs. Crawley having

stowed away in the kitchen the chicken broth and the leg of pork and the supply of eggs. Lucy had been engaged the while with the children, and when the two married ladies entered, they found that a shop had been opened at which all manner of luxuries were being readily sold and purchased at marvellously easy prices; the guava jelly was there, and the oranges, and the sugar-plums, red and yellow and striped; and, moreover, the gingerbread had been taken down in the audacity of their commercial speculations, and the nuts were spread out upon a board, behind which Lucy stood as shop-girl, disposing of them for kisses.

"Mamma, mamma," said Bobby, running up to his mother, "you must buy something of her," and he pointed with his fingers at the shop-girl. "You must give her two kisses for that heap of barley-sugar." Looking at Bobby's mouth at the time, one would have said that his kisses might be dispensed with.

When they were again in the pony carriage behind the impatient Puck, and were well away from the door, Fanny was the first to speak. "How very different those two are," she said;—"different in their minds and in their spirit!"

"But how much higher toned is her mind than his! How weak he is in many things, and how strong she is in everything! How false is his pride, and how false his shame!"

"But we must remember what he has to bear," said Mrs. Robarts. "It is not every one that can endure such a life as his without false pride and false shame."

"But she has neither," said Lucy.

"Because you have one hero in the family, does that give you a right to expect another?" said Mrs. Rob-

arts. "Of all my own acquaintance, Mrs. Crawley, I think, comes nearest to heroism." And then they passed by the Hogglestock school, and Mr. Crawley, when he heard the noise of the wheels, came out. "You have been very kind," said he, "to remain so long with my poor wife."

"We had a great many things to talk about, after you went."

"It is very kind of you, for she does not often see a friend, now-a-days. Will you have the goodness to tell Mr. Robarts that I shall be here at the school, at eleven o'clock to-morrow?" And then he bowed, taking off his hat to them, and they drove on.

"If he really does care about her comfort I shall not think so badly of him," said Lucy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GIANTS.

And now about the end of April news arrived almost simultaneously in all quarters of the habitable globe that was terrible in its import to one of the chief persons of our history;—some may think to the chief person in it. All high parliamentary people will doubtless so think, and the wives and daughters of such. The Titans warring against the gods had been for a while successful. Typhœus and Mimas, Porphyrion and Rhœcus, the giant brood of old, steeped in ignorance and wedded to corruption, had scaled the heights of Olympus, assisted by that audacious flinger of deadly ponderous missiles, who stands ever ready armed with his terrific sling,—Supplehouse, the Enceladus of the press. And in this universal cataclasm of the starry councils, what could a poor Diana do, Diana of the Petty Bag, but abandon her pride of place to some rude Orion? In other words, the ministry had been compelled to resign, and with them Mr. Harold Smith. "And so poor Harold is out, before he has well tasted the sweets of office," said Sowerby, writing to his friend the parson; "and as far as I know, the only piece of church patronage which has fallen in the way of the ministry since he joined it has made its way down to Framley,—to my great joy and contentment." But it hardly tended to Mark's joy and contentment

on the same subject that he should be so often reminded of the benefit conferred upon him.

Terrible was this break-down of the ministry, and especially to Harold Smith, who to the last had had confidence in that theory of new blood. He could hardly believe that a large majority of the House should vote against a government which he had only just joined. "If we are to go on in this way," he said to his young friend Green Walker, "the Queen's government cannot be carried on." That alleged difficulty as to carrying on the Queen's government has been frequently mooted in late years since a certain great man first introduced the idea. Nevertheless, the Queen's government is carried on, and the propensity and aptitude of men for this work seem to be not at all on the decrease. If we have but few young statesmen, it is because the old stagers are so fond of the rattle of their harness.

"I really do not see how the Queen's government is to be carried on," said Harold Smith to Green Walker, standing in a corner of one of the lobbies of the House of Commons on the first of those days of awful interest, in which the Queen was sending for one crack statesman after another. Some anxious men were beginning to doubt whether or no we should, in truth, be able to obtain the blessing of another Cabinet. The gods had all vanished from their places. Would the giants be good enough to do anything for us, or no? There were men who seemed to think that the giants would refuse to do anything for us. "The House will now be adjourned over till Monday, and I would not be in her Majesty's shoes for something," said Mr. Harold Smith.

"By Jove! no," said Green Walker, who in these days was a staunch Harold-Smithian, having felt a pride in joining himself on as a substantial support to a Cabinet minister. Had he contented himself with being merely a Brockite, he would have counted as nobody. "By Jove! no," and Green Walker opened his eyes and shook his head, as he thought of the perilous condition in which her Majesty must be placed. "I happen to know that Lord —— won't join them unless he has the Foreign Office," and he mentioned some hundred-handed Gyas supposed to be of the utmost importance to the councils of the Titans.

"And that, of course, is impossible. I don't see what on earth they are to do. There 's Sidonia; they do say that he 's making some difficulty now." Now Sidonia was another giant, supposed to be very powerful.

"We all know that the Queen won't see him," said Green Walker, who, being a member of Parliament for the Crewe Junction, and nephew to Lady Hartletop, of course had perfectly correct means of ascertaining what the Queen would do, and what she would not.

"The fact is," said Harold Smith, recurring again to his own situation as an ejected god, "that the House does not in the least understand what it is about;—does n't know what it wants. The question I should like to ask them is this: Do they intend that the Queen shall have a government, or do they not? Are they prepared to support such men as Sidonia and Lord de Terrier? If so, I am their obedient humble servant; but I shall be very much surprised, that 's all." Lord de Terrier was at this time recognised by all men as the leader of the giants.

"And so shall I, deucedly surprised. They can't do it, you know. There are the Manchester men. I ought to know something about them down in my country; and I say they can't support Lord de Terrier. It would n't be natural."

"Natural! Human nature has come to an end, I think," said Harold Smith, who could hardly understand that the world should conspire to throw over a government which he had joined, and that, too, before the world had waited to see how much he would do for it. "The fact is this, Walker, we have no longer among us any strong feeling of party."

"No, not a d——," said Green Walker, who was very energetic in his present political aspirations.

"And till we can recover that, we shall never be able to have a government firm-seated and sure-handed. Nobody can count on men from one week to another. The very members who in one month place a minister in power are the very first to vote against him in the next."

"We must put a stop to that sort of thing, otherwise we shall never do any good."

"I don't mean to deny that Brock was wrong with reference to Lord Brittleback. I think that he was wrong, and I have said so all through. But, heavens on earth——!" and instead of completing his speech Harold Smith turned away his head, and struck his hands together in token of his astonishment at the fatuity of the age. What he probably meant to express was this; that if such a good deed as that late appointment made at the Petty Bag Office were not held sufficient to atone for that other evil deed to which he had alluded, there would be an end of all justice in

sublunary matters. Was no offence to be forgiven, even when so great virtue had been displayed? "I attribute it all to Supplehouse," said Green Walker, trying to console his friend.

"Yes," said Harold Smith, now verging on the bounds of parliamentary eloquence, although he still spoke with bated breath, and to one solitary hearer. "Yes; we are becoming the slaves of a mercenary and irresponsible press;—of one single newspaper. There is a man endowed with no great talent, enjoying no public confidence, untrusted as a politician, and unheard of even as a writer by the world at large, and yet, because he is on the staff of the Jupiter, he is able to overturn the government and throw the whole country into dismay. It is astonishing to me that a man like Lord Brock should allow himself to be so timid." And nevertheless it was not yet a month since Harold Smith had been counselling with Supplehouse how a series of strong articles in the Jupiter, together with the expected support of the Manchester men, might probably be effective in hurling the minister from his seat. But at that time the minister had not revigorated himself with young blood. "How the Queen's government is to be carried on, that is the question now," Harold Smith repeated;—a difficulty which had not caused him much dismay at that period, about a month since, to which we have alluded. At this moment Sowerby and Supplehouse together joined them, having come out of the House, in which some unimportant business had been completed after the minister's notice of adjournment.

"Well, Harold," said Sowerby, "what do you say to your governor's statement?"

"I have nothing to say to it," said Harold Smith, looking up very solemnly from under the penthouse of his hat, and, perhaps, rather savagely. Sowerby had supported the government at the late crisis; but why was he now seen herding with such a one as Supplehouse?

"He did it pretty well, I think," said Sowerby.

"Very well, indeed," said Supplehouse; "as he always does those sort of things. No man makes so good an explanation of circumstances, or comes out with so telling a personal statement. He ought to keep himself in reserve for those sort of things."

"And who in the meantime is to carry on the Queen's government?" said Harold Smith, looking very stern.

"That should be left to men of lesser mark," said he of the Jupiter. "The points as to which one really listens to a minister, the subjects about which men really care, are always personal. How many of us are truly interested as to the best mode of governing India? But in a question touching the character of a prime minister we all muster together like bees round a sounding cymbal."

"That arises from envy, malice, and all uncharitableness," said Harold Smith.

"Yes; and from picking and stealing, evil-speaking, lying, and slandering," said Mr. Sowerby.

"We are so prone to desire and covet other men's places," said Supplehouse.

"Some men are so," said Sowerby; "but it is the evil-speaking, lying, and slandering, which does the mischief. Is it not, Harold?"

"And in the meantime how is the Queen's govern-

ment to be carried on?" said Mr. Green Walker. On the following morning it was known that Lord de Terrier was with the Queen at Buckingham Palace, and at about twelve, a list of the new ministry was published, which must have been in the highest degree satisfactory to the whole brood of giants. Every son of Tellus was included in it, as were also very many of the daughters. But then, late in the afternoon, Lord Brock was again summoned to the palace, and it was thought in the West End among the clubs that the gods had again a chance. "If only," said the Purist, an evening paper which was supposed to be very much in the interest of Mr. Harold Smith, "if only Lord Brock can have the wisdom to place the right men in the right places! It was only the other day that he introduced Mr. Smith into his government. That this was a step in the right direction every one has acknowledged, though unfortunately it was made too late to prevent the disturbance which has since occurred. It now appears probable that his lordship will again have an opportunity of selecting a list of statesmen with a view of carrying on the Queen's government; and it is to be hoped that such men as Mr. Smith may be placed in situations in which their talents, industry, and acknowledged official aptitudes may be of permanent service to the country." Supplehouse, when he read this at the club with Mr. Sowerby at his elbow, declared that the style was too well marked to leave any doubt as to the author; but we ourselves are not inclined to think that Mr. Harold Smith wrote the article himself, although it may be probable that he saw it in type. But the Jupiter the next morning settled the whole question, and made it known to the world that, in spite

of all the sendings and resendings, Lord Brock and the gods were permanently out, and Lord de Terrier and the giants permanently in. That fractious giant who would only go to the Foreign Office had, in fact, gone to some sphere of much less important duty, and Sidonia, in spite of the whispered dislike of an illustrious personage, opened the campaign with all the full appanages of a giant of the highest standing. "We hope," said the Jupiter, "that Lord Brock may not yet be too old to take a lesson. If so, the present decision of the House of Commons, and we may say of the country also, may teach him not to put his trust in such princes as Lord Brittleback, or such broken reeds as Mr. Harold Smith." Now this parting blow we always thought to be exceedingly unkind, and altogether unnecessary, on the part of Mr. Supplehouse.

"My dear," said Mrs. Harold, when she first met Miss Dunstable after the catastrophe was known, "how am I possibly to endure this degradation?" And she put her deeply-laced handkerchief up to her eyes.

"Christian resignation," suggested Miss Dunstable.

"Fiddlestick!" said Mrs. Harold Smith. "You millionaires always talk of Christian resignation, because you are never called on to resign anything. If I had any Christian resignation, I should n't have cared for such pomps and vanities. Think of it, my dear; a Cabinet minister's wife for only three weeks!"

"How does poor Mr. Smith endure it?"

"What! Harold? He only lives on the hope of vengeance. When he has put an end to Mr. Supplehouse, he will be content to die." And then there were further explanations in both Houses of Parliament, which were altogether satisfactory. The high-

bred, courteous giants assured the gods that they had piled Pelion on Ossa and thus climbed up into power, very much in opposition to their own good-wills; for they, the giants themselves, preferred the sweets of dignified retirement. But the voice of the people had been too strong for them; the effort had been made, not by themselves, but by others, who were determined that the giants should be at the head of affairs. Indeed, the spirit of the times was so clearly in favour of giants that there had been no alternative. So said Briareus to the Lords, and Orion to the Commons. And then the gods were absolutely happy in ceding their places; and so far were they from any uncelestial envy or malice which might not be divine, that they promised to give the giants all the assistance in their power in carrying on the work of government; upon which the giants declared how deeply indebted they would be for such valuable counsel and friendly assistance. All this was delightful in the extreme; but not the less did ordinary men seem to expect that the usual battle would go on in the old customary way. It is easy to love one's enemy when one is making fine speeches; but so difficult to do so in the actual every-day work of life. But there was and always has been this peculiar good point about the giants, that they are never too proud to follow in the footsteps of the gods. If the gods, deliberating painfully together, have elaborated any skilful project, the giants are always willing to adopt it as their own, not treating the bantling as a foster-child, but praising it and nursing it so that men should regard it as the undoubted offspring of their own brains. Now just at this time there had been a plan much thought of for increasing the number of the

bishops. Good active bishops were very desirable, and there was a strong feeling among certain excellent churchmen that there could hardly be too many of them. Lord Brock had his measure cut and dry. There should be a bishop of Westminster to share the Herculean toils of the metropolitan prelate, and another up in the North to Christianise the mining interests and wash white the blackamoors of Newcastle. Bishop of Beverley he should be called. But, in opposition to this, the giants, it was known, had intended to put forth the whole measure of their brute force. More curates, they said, were wanting, and district incumbents; not more bishops rolling in carriages. That bishops should roll in carriages was very good; but of such blessings the English world for the present had enough. And therefore Lord Brock and the gods had had much fear as to their little project. But now, immediately on the accession of the giants, it was known that the bishop bill was to be gone on with immediately. Some small changes would be effected so that the bill should be gigantic rather than divine; but the result would be altogether the same. It must, however, be admitted that bishops appointed by ourselves may be very good things, whereas those appointed by our adversaries will be anything but good. And, no doubt, this feeling went a long way with the giants. Be that as it may, the new bishop bill was to be their first work of government, and it was to be brought forward and carried, and the new prelates selected and put into their chairs all at once,—before the grouse should begin to crow and put an end to the doings of gods as well as giants. Among other minor effects arising from this decision was the following,

that Archdeacon and Mrs. Grantly returned to London, and again took the lodgings in which they had before been staying. On various occasions also during the first week of this second sojourn, Dr. Grantly might be seen entering the official chambers of the First Lord of the Treasury. Much counsel was necessary among high churchmen of great repute before any fixed resolution could wisely be made in such a matter as this; and few churchmen stood in higher repute than the archdeacon of Barchester. And then it began to be rumoured in the world that the minister had disposed at any rate of the see of Westminster. This present time was a very nervous one for Mrs. Grantly. What might be the aspirations of the archdeacon himself, we will not stop to inquire. It may be that time and experience had taught him the futility of earthly honours, and made him content with the comfortable opulence of his Barsetshire rectory. But there is no theory of church discipline which makes it necessary that a clergyman's wife should have an objection to a bishopric. The archdeacon probably was only anxious to give a disinterested aid to the minister, but Mrs. Grantly did long to sit in high places, and be at any rate equal to Mrs. Proudie. It was for her children, she said to herself, that she was thus anxious;—that they should have a good position before the world, and the means of making the best of themselves. "One is able to do nothing, you know, shut up there, down at Plumstead," she had remarked to Lady Lufton, on the occasion of her first visit to London. And yet the time was not long past when she had thought that rectory house at Plumstead to be by no means insufficient or contemptible. And then there came a question

whether or no Griselda should go back to her mother; but this idea was very strongly opposed by Lady Lufton, and ultimately with success. "I really think the dear girl is very happy with me," said Lady Lufton; "and if ever she is to belong to me more closely, it will be so well that we should know and love one another."

To tell the truth, Lady Lufton had been trying hard to know and love Griselda, but hitherto she had scarcely succeeded to the full extent of her wishes. That she loved Griselda was certain—with that sort of love which springs from a person's volition and not from the judgment. She had said all along to herself and others that she did love Griselda Grantly. She had admired the young lady's face, liked her manner, approved of her fortune and family, and had selected her for a daughter-in-law in a somewhat impetuous manner. Therefore she loved her. But it was by no means clear to Lady Lufton that she did as yet know her young friend. The match was a plan of her own, and therefore she stuck to it as warmly as ever; but she began to have some misgivings whether or no the dear girl would be to herself all that she had dreamed of in a daughter-in-law. "But, dear Lady Lufton," said Mrs. Grantly, "is it not possible that we may put her affections to too severe a test? What if she should learn to regard him, and then——"

"Ah! if she did, I should have no fear of the result. If she showed anything like love for Ludovic, he would be at her feet in a moment. He is impulsive, but she is not."

"Exactly, Lady Lufton. It is his privilege to be impulsive and to sue for her affection, and hers to

have her love sought for without making any demonstration. It is perhaps the fault of young ladies of the present day that they are too impulsive. They assume privileges which are not their own, and thus lose those which are."

"Quite true! I quite agree with you. It is probably that very feeling that has made me think so highly of Griselda. But then——" But then a young lady, though she need not jump down a gentleman's throat, or throw herself into his face, may give some signs that she is made of flesh and blood;—especially when her papa and mamma and all belonging to her are so anxious to make the path of her love run smooth. That was what was passing through Lady Lufton's mind; but she did not say it all; she merely looked it.

"I don't think she will ever allow herself to indulge in an unauthorised passion," said Mrs. Grantly.

"I am sure she will not," said Lady Lufton, with ready agreement, fearing perhaps in her heart that Griselda would never indulge in any passion, authorised or unauthorised.

"I don't know whether Lord Lufton sees much of her now," said Mrs. Grantly, thinking perhaps of that promise of Lady Lufton's with reference to his lordship's spare time.

"Just lately, during these changes, you know, everybody has been so much engaged. Ludovic has been constantly at the House, and then men find it so necessary to be at their clubs just now."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Mrs. Grantly, who was not at all disposed to think little of the importance of the present crisis, or to wonder that men should congregate together when such deeds were to be done as

those which now occupied the breasts of the Queen's advisers. At last, however, the two mothers perfectly understood each other. Griselda was still to remain with Lady Lufton; and was to accept her ladyship's son,—if he could only be induced to exercise his privilege of asking her; but in the meantime, as this seemed to be doubtful, Griselda was not to be debarred from her privilege of making what use she could of any other string which she might have to her bow.

"But, mamma," said Griselda, in a moment of unwatched intercourse between the mother and daughter, "is it really true that they are going to make papa a bishop?"

"We can tell nothing as yet, my dear. People in the world are talking about it. Your papa has been a good deal with Lord de Terrier."

"And is n't he prime minister?"

"Oh, yes; I am happy to say that he is."

"I thought the prime minister could make any one a bishop that he chooses,—any clergyman, that is."

"But there is no see vacant," said Mrs. Grantly.

"Then there is n't any chance," said Griselda, looking very glum.

"They are going to have an act of Parliament for making two more bishops. That 's what they are talking about, at least. And if they do——"

"Papa will be bishop of Westminster;—won't he? And we shall live in London?"

"But you must not talk about it, my dear."

"No, I won't. But, mamma, a bishop of Westminster will be higher than a bishop of Barchester; won't he? I shall so like to be able to snub those

Miss Proudies." It will therefore be seen that there were matters on which even Griselda Grantly could be animated. Like the rest of her family she was devoted to the church. Late on that afternoon the archdeacon returned home to dine in Mount Street, having spent the whole of the day between the Treasury Chambers, a meeting of Convocation, and his club. And when he did get home it was soon manifest to his wife that he was not laden with good news.

"It is almost incredible," he said, standing with his back to the drawing-room fire.

"What is incredible?" said his wife, sharing her husband's anxiety to the full.

"If I had not learned it as fact, I would not have believed it, even of Lord Brock," said the archdeacon.

"Learned what?" said the anxious wife.

"After all, they are going to oppose the bill."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Grantly.

"But they are."

"The bill for the two new bishops, archdeacon? Oppose their own bill!"

"Yes,—oppose their own bill. It is almost incredible; but so it is. Some changes have been forced upon us; little things which they had forgotten,—quite minor matters; and they now say that they will be obliged to divide against us on these twopenny-halfpenny, hair-splitting points. It is Lord Brock's own doing, too, after all that he said about abstaining from factious opposition to the government."

"I believe there is nothing too bad or too false for that man," said Mrs. Grantly.

"After all they said, too, when they were in power themselves, as to the present government opposing the

cause of religion! They declare now that Lord de Terrier cannot be very anxious about it, as he had so many good reasons against it a few weeks ago. Is it not dreadful that there should be such double-dealing in men in such positions?"

"It is sickening," said Mrs. Grantly. And then there was a pause between them as each thought of the injury that was done to them.

"But, archdeacon——"

"Well?"

"Could you not give up those small points, and shame them into compliance?"

"Nothing would shame them."

"But would it not be well to try?" The game was so good a one, and the stake so important, that Mrs. Grantly felt that it would be worth playing for to the last.

"It is no good."

"But I certainly would suggest it to Lord de Terrier. I am sure the country would go along with him; at any rate the church would."

"It is impossible," said the archdeacon. "To tell the truth, it did occur to me. But some of them down there seemed to think that it would not do."

Mrs. Grantly sat awhile on the sofa, still meditating in her mind whether there might not yet be some escape from so terrible a downfall. "But, archdeacon——"

"I 'll go upstairs and dress," said he, in despondency.

"But, archdeacon, surely the present ministry may have a majority on such a subject as that. I thought they were sure of a majority now."

"No; not sure."

"But at any rate the chances are in their favour? I do hope they 'll do their duty, and exert themselves to keep their members together." Then the archdeacon told out the whole of the truth. "Lord de Terrier says that under the present circumstances he will not bring the matter forward this session at all. So we had better go back to Plumstead." Mrs. Grantly then felt that there was nothing further to be said, and it will be proper that the historian should drop a veil over their sufferings.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"MAGNA EST VERITAS."

It was made known to the reader that in the early part of the winter Mr. Sowerby had a scheme for retrieving his lost fortunes and setting himself right in the world by marrying that rich heiress, Miss Dunstable. I fear my friend Sowerby does not, at present, stand high in the estimation of those who have come on with me thus far in this narrative. He has been described as a spendthrift and gambler, and as one scarcely honest in his extravagance and gambling. But nevertheless there are worse men than Mr. Sowerby, and I am not prepared to say that, should he be successful with Miss Dunstable, that lady would choose by any means the worst of the suitors who are continually throwing themselves at her feet. Reckless as this man always appeared to be, reckless as he absolutely was, there was still within his heart a desire for better things, and in his mind an understanding that he had hitherto missed the career of an honest English gentleman. He was proud of his position as member for his county, though hitherto he had done so little to grace it; he was proud of his domain at Chaldicotes, though the possession of it had so nearly passed out of his own hands; he was proud of the old blood that flowed in his veins; and he was proud also

of that easy, comfortable, gay manner, which went so far in the world's judgment to atone for his extravagance and evil practices. If only he could get another chance, as he now said to himself, things should go very differently with him. He would utterly forswear the whole company of Tozers. He would cease to deal in bills, and to pay Heaven only knows how many hundred per cent. for his moneys. He would no longer prey upon his friends, and would redeem his title-deeds from the clutches of the Duke of Omnium. If only he could get another chance! Miss Dunstable's fortune would do all this and ever so much more; and then, moreover, Miss Dunstable was a woman whom he really liked. She was not soft, feminine, or pretty, nor was she very young; but she was clever, self-possessed, and quite able to hold her own in any class;—and as to age, Mr. Sowerby was not very young himself. In making such a match he would have no cause of shame. He could speak of it before his friends without fear of their grimaces, and ask them to his house, with the full assurance that the head of his table would not disgrace him. And then as the scheme grew clearer and clearer to him, he declared to himself that if he should be successful, he would use her well, and not rob her of her money,—beyond what was absolutely necessary. He had intended to have laid his fortunes at her feet at Chaldicotes; but the lady had been coy. Then the deed was to have been done at Gatherum Castle, but the lady ran away from Gatherum Castle just at the time on which he had fixed. And since that, one circumstance after another had postponed the affair in London, till now at last he was resolved that he would

know his fate, let it be what it might. If he could not contrive that things should speedily be arranged, it might come to pass that he would be altogether debarred from presenting himself to the lady as Mr. Sowerby of Chaldicotes. Tidings had reached him, through Mr. Fothergill, that the duke would be glad to have matters arranged; and Mr. Sowerby well knew the meaning of that message.

Mr. Sowerby was not fighting this campaign alone, without the aid of any ally. Indeed, no man ever had a more trusty ally in any campaign than he had in this. And it was this ally, the only faithful comrade that clung to him through good and ill during his whole life, who first put it into his head that Miss Dunstable was a woman and might be married. "A hundred needy adventurers have attempted it, and failed already," Mr. Sowerby had said, when the plan was first proposed to him.

"But, nevertheless, she will some day marry some one; and why not you as well as another?" his sister had answered. For Mrs. Harold Smith was the ally of whom I have spoken. Mrs. Harold Smith, whatever may have been her faults, could boast of this virtue—that she loved her brother. He was probably the only human being that she did love. Children she had none; and as for her husband, it had never occurred to her to love him. She had married him for a position; and being a clever woman, with a good digestion and command of her temper, had managed to get through the world without much of that unhappiness which usually follows ill-assorted marriages. At home she managed to keep the upper hand, but she did so in an easy, good-humoured way that made

her rule bearable. Away from home she assisted her lord's political standing, though she laughed more keenly than any one else at his foibles. But the lord of her heart was her brother; and in all his scrapes, all his extravagances, and all his recklessness, she had ever been willing to assist him. With the view of doing this she had sought the intimacy of Miss Dunstable, and for the last year past had indulged every caprice of that lady. Or rather, she had had the wit to learn that Miss Dunstable was to be won, not by the indulgence of caprices, but by free and easy intercourse, with a dash of fun, and, at any rate, a semblance of honesty. Mrs. Harold Smith was not, perhaps, herself very honest by disposition; but in these latter days she had taken up a theory of honesty for the sake of Miss Dunstable;—not altogether in vain, for Miss Dunstable and Mrs. Harold Smith were certainly very intimate.

"If I am to do it at all, I must not wait any longer," said Mr. Sowerby to his sister a day or two after the final breakdown of the gods. The affection of the sister for the brother may be imagined from the fact that at such a time she could give up her mind to such a subject. But, in truth, her husband's position as a Cabinet minister was as nothing to her compared with her brother's position as a county gentleman. "One time is as good as another," said Mrs. Harold Smith.

"You mean that you would advise me to ask her at once."

"Certainly. But you must remember, Nat, that you will have no easy task. It will not do for you to kneel down and swear that you love her."

"If I do it at all, I shall certainly do it without kneeling;—you may be sure of that, Harriet."

"Yes, and without swearing that you love her. There is only one way in which you can be successful with Miss Dunstable. You must tell her the truth."

"What! tell her that I am ruined, horse, foot, and dragoons, and then bid her help me out of the mire?"

"Exactly;—that will be your only chance, strange as it may appear."

"This is very different from what you used to say down at Chaldicotes."

"So it is; but I know her much better than I did when we were there. Since then I have done but little else than study the freaks of her character. If she really likes you,—and I think she does,—she could forgive you any other crime but that of swearing that you loved her."

"I should hardly know how to propose without saying something about it."

"But you must say nothing;—not a word; you must tell her that you are a gentleman of good blood and high station, but sadly out at elbows."

"She knows that already."

"Of course she does; but she must know it as coming directly from your own mouth. And then tell her that you propose to set yourself right by marrying her;—by marrying her for the sake of her money."

"That will hardly win her, I should say."

"If it does not, no other way, that I know of, will do so. As I told you before, it will be no easy task. Of course you must make her understand that her happiness shall be cared for; but that must not be put prominently forward as your object. Your first ob-

ject is her money, and your only chance for success is in telling the truth."

"It is very seldom that a man finds himself in such a position as that," said Sowerby, walking up and down his sister's room; "and, upon my word, I don't think I am up to the task. I should certainly break down. I don't believe there 's a man in London could go to a woman with such a story as that, and then ask her to marry him."

"If you cannot, you may as well give it up," said Mrs. Harold Smith. "But if you can do it,—if you can go through with it in that manner,—my own opinion is that your chance of success would not be bad. The fact is," added the sister after a while, during which her brother was continuing his walk and meditating on the difficulties of his position,—"the fact is, you men never understand a woman. You give her credit neither for her strength nor for her weakness. You are too bold, and too timid. You think she is a fool and tell her so, and yet never can trust her to do a kind action. Why should she not marry you with the intention of doing you a good turn? After all, she would lose very little. There is the estate, and if she redeemed it, it would belong to her as well as to you."

"It would be a good turn indeed. I fear I should be too modest to put it to her in that way."

"Her position would be much better as your wife than it is at present. You are good-humoured and good-tempered; you would intend to treat her well, and, on the whole, she would be much happier as Mrs. Sowerby, of Chaldicotes, than she can be in her present position."

"If she cared about being married, I suppose she could be a peer's wife to-morrow."

"But I don't think she cares about being a peer's wife. A needy peer might perhaps win her in the way that I propose to you;—but then a needy peer would not know how to set about it. Needy peers have tried,—half-a-dozen, I have no doubt,—and have failed, because they have pretended that they were in love with her. It may be difficult, but your only chance is to tell her the truth."

"And where shall I do it?"

"Here, if you choose; but her own house will be better."

"But I never can see her there,—at least, not alone. I believe that she never is alone. She always keeps a lot of people round her in order to stave off her lovers. Upon my word, Harriet, I think I 'll give it up. It is impossible that I should make such a declaration to her as that you propose."

"Faint heart, Nat;——you know the rest."

"But the poet never alluded to such wooing as that you have suggested. I suppose I had better begin with a schedule of my debts, and make reference, if she doubts me, to Fothergill, the sheriff's officers, and the Tozer family."

"She will not doubt you, on that head; nor will she be a bit surprised." Then there was again a pause, during which Mr. Sowerby still walked up and down the room, thinking whether or no he might possibly have any chance of success in so hazardous an enterprise.

"I tell you what, Harriet," at last he said; "I wish you 'd do it for me."

"Well," said she, "if you really mean it, I will make the attempt."

"I am sure of this, that I shall never make it myself. I positively should not have the courage to tell her in so many words that I wanted to marry her for her money."

"Well, Nat, I will attempt it. At any rate, I am not afraid of her. She and I are excellent friends, and, to tell the truth, I think I like her better than any other woman that I know; but I never should have been intimate with her had it not been for your sake."

"And now you will have to quarrel with her, also for my sake?"

"Not at all. You 'll find that whether she accedes to my proposition or not, we shall continue friends. I do not think that she would die for me;—nor I for her. But as the world goes, we suit each other. Such a little trifle as this will not break our loves." And so it was settled. On the following day Mrs. Harold Smith was to find an opportunity of explaining the whole matter to Miss Dunstable, and was to ask that lady to share her fortune,—some incredible number of thousands of pounds,—with the bankrupt member for West Barsetshire, who in return was to bestow on her himself and his debts. Mrs. Harold Smith had spoken no more than the truth in saying that she and Miss Dunstable suited one another. And she had not improperly described their friendship. They were not prepared to die, one for the sake of the other. They had said nothing to each other of mutual love and affection. They never kissed, or cried, or made speeches when they met or when they parted. There was no great benefit for which either had to be grateful to the

other; no terrible injury which either had forgiven. But they suited each other; and this, I take it, is the secret of most of our pleasantest intercourse in the world. And it was almost grievous that they should suit each other, for Miss Dunstable was much the worthier of the two, had she but known it herself. It was almost to be lamented that she should have found herself able to live with Mrs. Harold Smith on terms that were perfectly satisfactory to herself. Mrs. Harold Smith was worldly, heartless,—to all the world but her brother,—and, as has been above hinted, almost dishonest. Miss Dunstable was not worldly, though it was possible that her present style of life might make her so; she was affectionate, fond of truth, and prone to honesty, if those around would but allow her to exercise it. But she was fond of ease and humour, sometimes of wit that might almost be called broad, and she had a thorough love of ridiculing the world's humbugs. In all these propensities Mrs. Harold Smith indulged her.

Under these circumstances they were now together almost every day. It had become quite a habit with Mrs. Harold Smith to have herself driven early in the forenoon to Miss Dunstable's house; and that lady, though she could never be found alone by Mr. Sowerby, was habitually so found by his sister. And after that they would go out together, or each separately, as fancy or the business of the day might direct them. Each was easy to the other in this alliance, and they so managed that they never trod on each other's corns. On the day following the agreement made between Mr. Sowerby and Mrs. Harold Smith, that lady as usual called on Miss Dunstable, and soon found her-

self alone with her friend in a small room which the heiress kept solely for her own purposes. On special occasions persons of various sorts were there admitted; occasionally a parson who had a church to build, or a dowager laden with the last morsel of town slander, or a poor author who could not get due payment for the efforts of his brain, or a poor governess on whose feeble stamina the weight of the world had borne too hardly. But men who by possibility could be lovers did not make their way thither, nor women who could be bores. In these latter days, that is, during the present London season, the doors of it had been oftener opened to Mrs. Harold Smith than to any other person. And now the effort was to be made with the object of which all this intimacy had been effected. As she came thither in her carriage Mrs. Harold Smith herself was not altogether devoid of that sinking of the heart which is so frequently the forerunner of any difficult and hazardous undertaking. She had declared that she would feel no fear in making the little proposition. But she did feel something very like it; and when she made her entrance into the little room she certainly wished that the work was done and over.

"How is poor Mr. Smith to-day?" asked Miss Dunstable, with an air of mock condolence, as her friend seated herself in her accustomed easy-chair. The downfall of the gods was as yet a history hardly three days old, and it might well be supposed that the late lord of the Petty Bag had hardly recovered from his misfortune.

"Well, he is better, I think, this morning. At least I should judge so from the manner in which he confronted his eggs. But still I don't like the way he

handles the carving-knife. I am sure he is always thinking of Mr. Supplehouse at those moments."

"Poor man! I mean Supplehouse. After all, why should n't he follow his trade as well as another? Live and let live, that 's what I say."

"Ay, but it 's kill and let kill with him. That is what Harold says. However, I am tired of all that now, and I came here to-day to talk about something else."

"I rather like Mr. Supplehouse, myself," exclaimed Miss Dunstable. "He never makes any bones about the matter. He has a certain work to do, and a certain cause to serve,—namely, his own; and in order to do that work, and serve that cause, he uses such weapons as God has placed in his hands."

"That 's what the wild beasts do."

"And where will you find men honester than they? The tiger tears you up because he is hungry and wants to eat you. That 's what Supplehouse does. But there are so many among us tearing up one another without any excuse of hunger. The mere pleasure of destroying is reason enough."

"Well, my dear, my mission to you to-day is certainly not one of destruction, as you will admit when you hear it. It is one, rather, very absolutely of salvation. I have come to make love to you."

"Then the salvation, I suppose, is not for myself," said Miss Dunstable. It was quite clear to Mrs. Harold Smith that Miss Dunstable had immediately understood the whole purport of this visit, and that she was not in any great measure surprised. It did not seem from the tone of the heiress's voice, or from the serious look which at once settled on her face, that she would

be prepared to give a very ready compliance. But then great objects can only be won with great efforts.

"That 's as may be," said Mrs. Harold Smith. "For you and another also, I hope. But I trust, at any rate, that I may not offend you?"

"Oh, laws, no; nothing of that kind ever offends me now."

"Well, I suppose you are used to it."

"Like the eels, my dear. I don't mind it the least in the world,—only sometimes, you know, it is a little tedious."

"I 'll endeavour to avoid that, so I may as well break the ice at once. You know enough of Nathaniel's affairs to be aware that he is not a very rich man."

"Since you do ask me about it, I suppose there 's no harm in saying that I believe him to be a very poor man."

"Not the least harm in the world, but just the reverse. Whatever may come of this, my wish is that the truth should be told scrupulously on all sides; the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Magna est veritas," said Miss Dunstable. "The bishop of Barchester taught me as much Latin as that at Chaldicotes; and he did add some more, but there was a long word, and I forgot it."

"The bishop was quite right, my dear, I 'm sure. But if you go to your Latin, I 'm lost. As we were just now saying, my brother's pecuniary affairs are in a very bad state. He has a beautiful property of his own, which has been in the family for I can't say how many centuries;—long before the Conquest, I know."

"I wonder what my ancestors were then?"

"It does not much signify to any of us," said Mrs.

Harold Smith, with a moral shake of her head, "what our ancestors were; but it 's a sad thing to see an old property go to ruin."

"Yes, indeed; we none of us like to see our property going to ruin, whether it be old or new. I have some of that sort of feeling already, although mine was only made the other day out of an apothecary's shop."

"God forbid that I should ever help you to ruin it," said Mrs. Harold Smith. "I should be sorry to be the means of your losing a ten-pound note."

"Magna est veritas, as the dear bishop said," exclaimed Miss Dunstable. "Let us have the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as we agreed just now." Mrs. Harold Smith did begin to find that the task before her was difficult. There was a hardness about Miss Dunstable when matters of business were concerned on which it seemed almost impossible to make any impression. It was not that she had evinced any determination to refuse the tender of Mr. Sowerby's hand; but she was so painfully resolute not to have dust thrown in her eyes! Mrs. Harold Smith had commenced with a mind fixed upon avoiding what she called humbug; but this sort of humbug had become so prominent a part of her usual rhetoric, that she found it very hard to abandon it.

"And that 's what I wish," said she. "Of course my chief object is to secure my brother's happiness."

"That 's very unkind to poor Mr. Harold Smith."

"Well, well, well;—you know what I mean."

"Yes, I think I do know what you mean. Your brother is a gentleman of good family, but of no means."

"Not quite so bad as that."

"Of embarrassed means, then, or anything that you will; whereas I am a lady of no family, but of sufficient wealth. You think that if you brought us together, and made a match of it, it would be a very good thing for——; for whom?" said Miss Dunstable.

"Yes, exactly," said Mrs. Harold Smith.

"For which of us? Remember the bishop, now, and his nice little bit of Latin."

"For Nathaniel, then," said Mrs. Harold Smith, boldly. "It would be a very good thing for him." And a slight smile came across her face as she said it. "Now that 's honest, or the mischief is in it."

"Yes, that 's honest enough. And did he send you here to tell me this?"

"Well, he did that, and something else."

"And now let 's have the something else. The really important part, I have no doubt, has been spoken."

"No, by no means; by no means all of it. But you are so hard on one, my dear, with your running after honesty, that one is not able to tell the real facts as they are. You make one speak in such a bald, naked way."

"Ah, you think that anything naked must be indecent; even truth."

"I think it is more proper-looking, and better suited, too, for the world's work, when it goes about with some sort of a garment on it. We are so used to a leaven of falsehood in all we hear and say, now-a-days, that nothing is more likely to deceive us than the absolute truth. If a shopkeeper told me that his wares were simply middling, of course I should think that they were not worth a farthing. But all that has noth-

ing to do with my poor brother. Well, what was I saying?"

"You were going to tell me how well he would use me, no doubt."

"Something of that kind."

"That he would n't beat me; or spend all my money if I managed to have it tied up out of his power; or look down on me with contempt because my father was an apothecary! Was not that what you were going to say?"

"I was going to tell you that you might be more happy as Mrs. Sowerby of Chaldicotes than you can be as Miss Dunstable——"

"Of Mount Lebanon. And had Mr. Sowerby no other message to send?—nothing about love, or anything of that sort? I should like, you know, to understand what his feelings are before I take such a leap."

"I do believe he has as true a regard for you as any man of his age ever does have——"

"For a woman of mine. That is not putting it in a very devoted way, certainly; but I am glad to see that you remember the bishop's maxim."

"What would you have me say? If I told you that he was dying for love, you would say I was trying to cheat you; and now because I don't tell you so, you say that he is wanting in devotion. I must say you are hard to please."

"Perhaps I am, and very unreasonable into the bargain. I ought to ask no questions of the kind when your brother proposes to do me so much honour. As for my expecting the love of a man who condescends to wish to be my husband, that, of course, would be

monstrous. What right can I have to think that any man should love me? It ought to be enough for me to know that as I am rich, I can get a husband. What business can such as I have to inquire whether the gentleman who would so honour me really would like my company, or would only deign to put up with my presence in his household."

"Now, my dear Miss Dunstable——"

"Of course I am not such an ass as to expect that any gentleman should love me; and I feel that I ought to be obliged to your brother for sparing me the string of complimentary declarations which are usual on such occasions. He, at any rate, is not tedious;—or rather you on his behalf; for no doubt his own time is so occupied with his parliamentary duties that he cannot attend to this little matter himself. I do feel grateful to him; and perhaps nothing more will be necessary than to give him a schedule of the property, and name an early day for putting him in possession." Mrs. Smith did feel that she was rather badly used. This Miss Dunstable, in their mutual confidences, had so often ridiculed the love-making grimaces of her mercenary suitors,—had spoken so fiercely against those who had persecuted her, not because they had desired her money, but on account of their ill-judgment in thinking her to be a fool,—that Mrs. Smith had a right to expect that the method she had adopted for opening the negotiation would be taken in a better spirit. Could it be possible, after all, thought Mrs. Smith to herself, that Miss Dunstable was like other women, and that she did like to have men kneeling at her feet? Could it be the case that she had advised her brother badly, and that it would have been better

for him to have gone about his work in the old-fashioned way? "They are very hard to manage," said Mrs. Harold Smith to herself, thinking of her own sex.

"He was coming here himself," said she, "but I advised him not to do so."

"That was so kind of you!"

"I thought that I could explain to you more openly and more freely what his intentions really are."

"Oh! I have no doubt that they are honourable," said Miss Dunstable. "He does not want to deceive me in that way, I am quite sure." It was impossible to help laughing, and Mrs. Harold Smith did laugh.

"Upon my word, you would provoke a saint," said she.

"I am not likely to get into any such company by the alliance that you are now suggesting to me. There are not many saints usually at Chaldicotes, I believe; —always excepting my dear bishop and his wife."

"But, my dear, what am I to say to Nathaniel?"

"Tell him, of course, how much obliged to him I am."

"Do listen to me one moment. I dare say that I have done wrong to speak to you in such a bold, unromantic way."

"Not at all. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. That 's what we agreed upon. But one's first efforts in any line are always apt to be a little uncouth."

"I will send Nathaniel to you himself."

"No, do not do so. Why torment either him or me? I do like your brother; in a certain way I like him much. But no earthly consideration would induce me to marry him. Is it not so glaringly plain that he

would marry me for my money only that you have not even dared to suggest any other reason?"

"Of course it would have been nonsense to say that he had no regard whatever towards your money."

"Of course it would;—absolute nonsense. He is a poor man with a good position, and he wants to marry me because I have got that which he wants. But, my dear, I do not want that which he has got, and therefore the bargain would not be a fair one."

"But he would do his very best to make you happy."

"I am so much obliged to him. But you see, I am very happy as I am. What should I gain?"

"A companion whom you confess that you like."

"Ah! but I don't know that I should like too much even of such a companion as your brother. No, my dear;—it won't do. Believe me when I tell you, once for all, that it won't do."

"Do you mean, then, Miss Dunstable, that you 'll never marry?"

"To-morrow;—if I met any one that I fancied, and he would have me. But I rather think that any that I may fancy won't have me. In the first place, if I marry any one, the man must be quite indifferent to money."

"Then you 'll not find him in this world, my dear."

"Very possibly not," said Miss Dunstable. All that was further said upon the subject need not be here repeated. Mrs. Harold Smith did not give up her cause quite at once, although Miss Dunstable had spoken so plainly. She tried to explain how eligible would be her friend's situation as mistress of Chaldicotes, when Chaldicotes should owe no penny to any man; and went so far as to hint that the master of Chaldicotes,

if relieved of his embarrassments and known as a rich man, might in all probability be found worthy of a peerage when the gods should return to Olympus. Mr. Harold Smith, as a Cabinet minister, would, of course, do his best. But it was all of no use. "It 's not my destiny," said Miss Dunstable, "and therefore do not press it any longer."

"But we shall not quarrel," said Mrs. Harold Smith, almost tenderly.

"Oh, no;—why should we quarrel?"

"And you won't look glum at my brother?"

"Why should I look glum at him? But, Mrs. Smith, I 'll do more than not looking glum at him. I do like you, and I do like your brother, and if I can in any moderate way assist him in his difficulties, let him tell me so." Soon after this, Mrs. Harold Smith went her way. Of course, she declared in a very strong manner that her brother could not think of accepting from Miss Dunstable any such pecuniary assistance as that offered;—and, to give her her due, such was the feeling of her mind at the moment; but as she went to meet her brother and gave him an account of this interview, it did occur to her that possibly Miss Dunstable might be a better creditor than the Duke of Omnium for the Chaldicotes property.

END OF VOL. I.

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